First Call for Children

'The essential needs of children should be given priority in bad times as well as good' — *Plan of Action, World Summit for Children*

The Summit: Three years later

Front row: President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro of Nicaragua, left, was co-chair of the Summit anniversary round table with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh, seated on the other side of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. UNICEF Executive Director James P. Grant is at right.

The World Summit for Children changed the way governments keep their promises. "Transcending differences of ethnicity, politics, religion and culture," United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said the Summit has drawn countries together in a common purpose and revolutionized social development by establishing "clear standards" for children's welfare.

The Secretary-General was speaking at the gathering of eight Heads of State or Government and more than 20 Foreign or other Ministers on 30 September, to mark the third anniversary of the World Summit. The leaders were invited to the United Nations to collectively reaffirm the promises of the Summit and pledge support for the goals for 1995 (see ***First Call for Children***, July-September 1993). By reaching these goals, the world will save the lives of 2 million children a year and make millions more healthier and happier.

Education is one of the basic requirements for a better life and is guaranteed as a right by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet, at least one third and often more than three quarters of children in developing countries are deprived of effective primary education. An important focus of this issue of ***First Call for Children*** is the way some innovative educational projects are helping give children a more hopeful future. We also feature Mexico's efforts to increase the use of oral rehydration therapy and Nigeria's success in curbing dracunculiasis (guinea worm disease).

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First Call for Children

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Primary education now compulsory in Tamil Nadu

With the illiteracy rate in India hovering near 50 per cent and child labour on the rise, leaders in the southern state of Tamil Nadu hope to increase opportunities for its children through a new strategy that will keep them in school and out of the workforce.

Tamil Nadu will become the first state in the country to enact new legislation making primary education compulsory and offering ways to ensure parental compliance with the law.

"Having now established a primary school network..., we feel the time is appropriate to introduce new legislation to provide for compulsory enrolment and retention of children in primary schools," said V.R. Nedunchezhiyan, Finance Minister of Tamil Nadu, in his 1993-1994 budget speech.

A central part of the strategy will be the Government's five-year programme to progressively eliminate child labour in the match industry, where children constitute an estimated 25 to 45 per cent of the workforce, and in the fireworks industry, where pockets of child labour still exist.

A campaign of social mobilization and the reinforcement of existing development programmes are other elements of the strategy formulated by representatives of the Departments of Labour and Employment, Social Welfare and Education, in collaboration with UNICEF.

Progress and problems

Tamil Nadu has made rapid strides in the field of education. According to official statistics, literacy has risen from 54 per cent in 1981 to 64 per cent (male, 75 per cent and female, 52 per cent) in 1991, ranking it second to Kerala among the larger states in India. Drop-out rates have also steadily declined in the last decade.

Still, 20 per cent of the children in schools — a majority of them girls — drop out before learning basic skills. The quality of education remains a major problem: Studies indicate that more than half the students in grades

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Women's and children's issues advance at World Human Rights Conference

By Shalini Dewan

Despite pervasive pessimism that the World Conference on Human Rights might fail to advance the cause of human rights because of conflicting views on a number of pertinent issues, at the end, the 10-day Conference succeeded in bridging the ideological divide to produce an optimistic and visionary 70-page declaration that does signal hope for the future.

Adopted by consensus by representatives of 171 States, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, though imprecise on many points, offers the world a common plan to promote and protect human rights around the globe. Although some countries initially challenged the concept of universality, arguing that the same human rights norms were not relevant in all parts of the world but varied according to a country's history, culture and tradition, the Conference succeeded in reaffirming this key concept. It also stressed the basic principle of indivisibility of human rights — that both civil and political, as well as economic, social and cultural rights are interrelated. Most importantly, the final Declaration contains some key recommendations to guarantee and safeguard the rights of women and children.

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali congratulated the Conference for forging "a new vision for global action for human rights into the next century." It will take some time, however, for that vision to become reality and before a hope for the future can eradicate the suffering of the present — suffering that was exposed in graphic detail for the world to see.

Among the hundreds of organizations spotlighting abuses with the hope of redress, voices claiming the rights of women emerged the loudest, while the child rights movement continued to gain momentum. As groups and issues competed for global attention, it became clear that by guaranteeing the rights of women and children — two of the largest segments of the world's population — the world as a whole would gain.

A breakthrough for women

In fact, the cause of women was dominant in the discussions, scoring a major victory for the international women's movement and galvanizing the world in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing (China) in 1995.

"The extraordinary strides made by the women's movement can't be underestimated," says Stephen Lewis, who represented the Executive Director of UNICEF at the Conference. "We're talking about 52 per cent of the world's population and a palpable breakthrough in one of the great human rights struggles of the last quarter of the 20th century."

UNICEF/1992/Press

Securing the economic and social rights of women and children was recognized as critical at the Vienna Human Rights Conference (14-25 June). Here a Somali mother holds her malnourished infant.

It was no accident that women were the most effective in getting their messages heard. What has become known as the Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights had spent three years preparing for the Conference, during which time some 950 different women's organizations around the world have joined the coalition backing the campaign.

At a special Global Tribunal on Violations of Women's Human Rights, women from around the world stood before a packed audience and testified

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Vienna conference supports NGO proposal to protect children in war

By Thomas Hammarberg

The recommendations in the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights will have a profound impact on children. Among them is one important proposal that appears well into the text. "The World Conference strongly supports the proposal that the Secretary-General initiate a study into means of improving the protection of children in armed conflict...," states the final document.

Conduct a study

The need for a study into improving the protection of children in war was first raised at a hearing last October, at which members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and representatives of UNICEF and other UN agencies as well as non-governmental organizations testified about the impact on children of the conflicts in such states as Angola, Somalia and former Yugoslavia.

It became clear during the hearing that children suffer greatly. They are prevented from eating, mutilated by mines and raped in the 'cleansing' that is practised by States.

The world community has not done enough to save these children. In many countries the humanitarian norms are insufficient, and even those standards agreed upon are not respected. Efforts to reach children in war zones are sabotaged and manipulated for political and military reasons.

New and effective humanitarian norms need to be designed and, above

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READEX FICHE

Innovative preschool gives Honduran children a better start

More than 39 per cent of Honduran children drop out of first grade; in second grade the rate is close to 20 per cent.

By Donna Paine

At quarter to eight in the morning, Carla, her long black hair pulled back in a pony-tail, waits with her mother at the front gate of the two-room schoolhouse, clutching a pink plastic doll against her corduroy overalls. Although she has been in preschool only a week, Carla already knows several songs which she brightly sings, without a hint of shyness.

Carla's mother says it takes them half an hour to walk to school each morning, but it is worth it to prepare Carla for first grade.

Two young boys waiting with her are more reticent. Seven-year-old Luis, who has never been to school, and six-year-old Miguel, carrying his snack in a plastic container, smile timidly, then hide their faces.

Carla, Luis and Miguel are just three of the more than 40,000 Honduran preschoolers benefiting from an innovative low-cost, high impact programme begun in 1990 that teaches children the basic skills they need for primary school.

'Repeat after me'

According to the Ministry of Education, in 1989 one third of all first graders, 22 per cent of second graders, and 12 per cent of third graders repeated a grade. It is not uncommon in Honduras for 10 or 12-year-olds to still be in third grade.

And they may be considered the lucky ones. Many children leave school altogether when they are very young — the drop-out rate in first grade is higher than 39 per cent and is close to 20 per cent in second grade. In rural areas, the rates are even higher.

The accelerated preschool programme is an attempt to stem the high rates at which children repeat primary grades, or drop out altogether, by stimulating children's interest in learning, developing their social and motor skills, and acclimatizing them to the school environment.

At more than 2,600 Community Centres for Initiation to School (CCIEs), youngsters are taught colours, shapes and numbers, as well as songs and stories about personal hygiene, environmental conservation and national customs.

The centres are set up only where there is no other preschool, primarily in rural areas, and operate three hours a day for two months, in December and January, before the school year begins in February.

Building the volunteer base

The teachers in the CCIEs are all volunteers: They can be parents, retirees, full-time or unemployed teachers, or other community members. They are required to have a sixth grade education and a genuine desire to share the joy of learning with the children in their care.

Many travel as far as their young students do to get to the rural schoolhouses, and some take money out of their own pockets to pay for supplies or snacks for the children. Their only compensation is in the smiles, hugs and kisses of the children, and the knowledge that they are helping the next generation get a better start on the road to scholastic success.

If a community has more than 10 children ready to start first grade, the Ministry of Education will try to provide a volunteer and supplies for the centre. Most of the CCIEs average 15 preschoolers per class, depending on the number of children and teachers.

To increase the number of teachers, the Ministry of Education has also trained 2,600 second-year students in teacher training school to be CCIE volunteers. Nearly 70 per cent of the 2,675 volunteers in 1992/1993 were students training to be teachers. Most are placed in schools in their own hamlets, where they know the children and their families. This helps to generate community participation and support.

"The experience is magnificent," enthuses 17-year-old Miriam Matamoras from Choluteca. "It's helping me adapt not only to the children, but also to the realities of a rural environment, where we do our teaching practice."

Head start in school

It is the primary school teachers who see the real impact of the programme. Ersinia Osegera, who teaches first grade in the rural southern department of Valle, sees a striking difference between the children who have attended the CCIEs and those who have not.

"Children who attend the CCIEs come to school with more interest and enthusiasm. Since they're already accustomed to going to school daily, they attend more days of the year and don't drop out as much," says Osegera.

"Children who haven't gone to the centres aren't as advanced, and are often the ones who have to repeat first grade."

In Talanga, a rural village with more oxen than cars, 17-year-old Rosabel Martín said the parents of her preschoolers are excited about the programme, and very involved. "All the parents are thrilled with it and now they're talking about starting up a kindergarten here year-round."

José Aguilar Corrales said the CCIE his son attends near Cedeño has had the same impact on his community. But he is particularly pleased that his youngest son, José, is excited about first grade. "At first he was scared, but now he comes home happy, singing songs," says Corrales. "He's really enthusiastic about starting school."

Donna Paine is a freelance journalist and consultant for UNICEF Tegucigalpa.

Tamil Nadu

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four and five fail to meet basic literacy levels. Given the prevalence of unemployment among the educated, the market for child labour and the problems of quality of education, few incentives exist for parents to keep children in school.

In the match industry, where child labour is most prevalent in Tamil Nadu, a study shows that primary school enrolment is lower among girls than boys in both the 6-11 and 12-14 age groups. Drop-out rates for girls are nearly double those for boys. A sample survey of families with working children revealed that 70 per cent of boys attended school while 80 per cent of girls worked full time.

Incentives for schooling

One proposal to ensure compliance with the new law is to establish village committees that would apply nominal fines to parents who do not enrol children in primary school or who pull them out early. The funds collected could be used, under the management of the committees, to improve schools and for other local needs.

The five-year programme of action also recognizes the need to strengthen and improve the quality of educational facilities and teaching.

Among the strategies for eliminating child labour in the match industry and the vestiges of it in the fireworks industry is the strict enforcement of existing laws, including the Child Labour Act. Other proposals include the strengthening of enforcement capacity, the creation of a special court to handle child labour cases in the area, improvement of working conditions so adult employees can earn enough to support their families, and other measures to reduce poverty in families when children stop working.

A programme of social mobilization, communication and community awareness is also needed, to encourage people's opposition to child labour and awareness of its detrimental effects and support for universal primary education.

A particular focus of the campaign would be education for girls and improvement of the status of the girl child.

Child match makers of Tamil Nadu

Women and children perform most of the arduous, hand labour involved in making matches in Tamil Nadu, which produces 85 per cent of the matches used in India.

Between 45,000 and 80,000 children are estimated to work in the industry, approximately 80 per cent of them girls. Their average age is 10-14 years, although many start earlier.

Poverty is an important factor. In a survey, 40 per cent of families indicated that children's income accounted for one third to one half of total family income. Half the families with working children would fall below the poverty line if the children did not work full time. They are paid a piece rate; to earn Rs. 15 (48 US cents) in a day, they must crouch for between 10 and 12 hours packing, filling and labelling boxes. Postural defects and tuberculosis are two common health problems. A survey also revealed that 31 per cent of children between 10 and 15 years of age had not reached the average height of a 10-year-old.

Increased demand for labour has meant that child workers are brought in from surrounding districts. The daily commute of between three and four hours can mean a work day beginning at 4 a.m. and lasting as long as 14 hours.

Schools make special efforts to promote girls' literacy

Only 4 out of 10 women in India can read and write. In the desert state of Rajasthan, where customs and climate conspire to relegate girls and women to especially subordinate roles, the figure drops to only 2 out of 10.

Yet an informal school system has emerged in Rajasthan and is giving girls and women literacy skills to improve their lives. The schools, run by the Rural Health Research and Development Trust (URMAL), replace outside teachers reluctant to work in remote areas with teachers drawn from the community. Part of their job is to convince parents to send their girls to school. For additional encouragement, if a family sends a daughter to an URMAL school, the Trust itself will pay the family's Rs. 10 (32 US cents) compulsory monthly contribution towards the teacher's salary.

The girl/boy ratio is better in URMAL schools. In one village, 14 of the 25 students in the URMAL school are girls, compared with 15 out of 125 students in the district's government school. To encourage literacy among adults, the Trust also runs a programme that attempts to take women through five years of formal schooling in 24 months.

It could be only a matter of time before education quietly changes the lives of the women in this desert state. In south India, where female literacy programmes have been in place for years, children's inoculation rates have shot up, demands for fairer wages are being heard and women have launched an attack on *arrack*, a local liquor that soaks up the family income. (From *People and the Planet*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1993, International Planned Parenthood Federation, London.)

Nine nations to meet on education

The goal of Education for All, the theme of the historic world conference held in Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990, is once again the topic of a major Summit meeting. Leaders of the nine most populous developing nations — Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan — will gather in India in December for the Nine Most Populous Developing Nations Education Summit.

Ensuring that by the year 2000 all children receive the education they need to be productive and happy will hinge in large part on the commitments and achievements of these nine countries. Together they account for almost 75 per cent of the world's nearly 1 billion illiterate people and more than half of all out-of-school children. Six of the nine countries have severe problems of gender disparity in education. Many of the strategies they are using to tackle these problems and the successes they achieve can help other countries with similar situations.

The Summit aims to achieve stronger political commitment from Heads of State/Government, to develop and apply strategies and mobilize resources with a greater sense of urgency, to share valuable lessons and experience and to create an environment for donors that will increase assistance to basic education.

New book on life of Gypsies released

Children of Minorities: Gypsies, a new publication from the UNICEF International Child Development Centre (ICDC) in Florence (Italy), examines issues facing the world's 7 million to 8 million Gypsy children, and particularly their situation in Europe.

The volume, part of the Innocenti Insights series, grew out of a two-day workshop run by ICDC in October 1992 on 'Growing up as a Gypsy'. The essays analyse such issues as the living conditions, health, accommodation and education of Gypsy children and their families, past and ongoing programmes targeting Gypsies and lessons to be learnt from those experiences. The volume also includes a comparative analysis of living conditions of Gypsy groups in former Czechoslovakia, France, Italy and former Yugoslavia.

Innocenti Insights, *Children of Minorities: Gypsies*, edited by Sandro Costarelli (ISBN 88-85401-11-2), is available for US$9 from the International Child Development Centre, Spedale degli Innocenti, Piazza SS. Anunziata 12, 50122, Florence, Italy.

Educating Gypsy children

At least 15 per cent of Bulgaria's 9 million people belong to minorities and face discrimination. Of all the minorities, however, the 577,000 Gypsies suffer the most severe discrimination. The illiteracy rate for Gypsies living in Bulgaria is 60 per cent, more than double the rate of other groups. More than 60 per cent of Gypsies may be out of work — four times the nation's unemployment rate.

JACK GLATTBACH reports on how a unique education programme developed by the Bulgarian Committee for UNICEF aims to give Gypsy children a better future.

Gypsy children in their classroom at a kindergarten in Sofia (Bulgaria). The children live at the school during the week and return to their homes on weekends.

Gypsy communities around the world face disadvantage and deprivation and Bulgaria's Gypsies are no exception.

There may be as many 60 groups and subgroups of Gypsies in Bulgaria, each with different customs and lifestyles. Some Gypsies are Muslim, others Christian. They speak a variety of languages, some Turkish, others Romani, others a dialect from Romania, but rarely Bulgarian.

What they have in common is the prejudice they confront and often the harshest living conditions: a lack of safe drinking water, poor or non-existent sanitation and higher rates of birth and infant mortality than the general population. Gypsy children, in particular, are at risk, as a situation analysis prepared in 1991 shows.

Living in underserved communities, with poor job and lifestyle prospects and having only their traditions as security, it is not surprising that few Gypsy children finish more than four or five years of school. Even there, discrimination is well entrenched. A 1992 survey found that 72 per cent of Bulgarians do not want their children attending school with Gypsies.

For the most part, Gypsy children attend one of the country's 31 primary schools offering 'intensive labour training', that have exceptionally high drop-out and repeat rates and concentrate only on providing training for low-skill jobs.

Pilot project

"The situation analysis gave us the danger signal about the Gypsy children," says Rossitza Milatchkova, the energetic Executive Secretary of the Bulgarian National Committee for UNICEF, describing the beginnings of the Committee's pilot education project, 'The child and the family of Bulgaria's Gypsies'.

A total of nearly 500 Gypsy children, ranging from 3 to 16 years of age and attending schools in six different communities, were selected to participate in the project. It aims to give Gypsy children a better understanding of both Gypsy and Bulgarian languages, cultures and traditions, and thus improve their self-confidence and interest in school.

Problems faced by Gypsy children from nursery to mid-secondary levels — particularly problems of socialization and integration caused by low competence in Bulgarian — were examined and teacher materials were developed. More than 60 teachers were trained and activities with the children begun.

In the nursery and primary schools, the project developed a bilingual methodology and materials for improving the children's Bulgarian language skills, in addition to health and personal hygiene education.

Lessons were also developed for all age groups in the history, culture and traditions of Gypsies. Sex education and information on family planning were included in activities in secondary schools.

As part of the extracurricular activities in the schools, which often involved the local Gypsy communities, the children explored the arts, crafts and folklore of both Gypsy and Bulgarian cultures.

Virtually no books existed on Gypsies in Bulgaria, and Mrs. Lozinka Jordanova, one of the country's leading ethnologists, has been a major resource for developing educational materials and activities for the project. To date, three books have been published, intended primarily for teachers and trainers, although one book, *Common Cultures and Rituals of Bulgarians and Gypsies*, is also very popular among Gypsy parents.

While progress was slow in the beginning and two schools dropped out because of local pressures, six schools have completed the first full year of the project and plan to continue.

The Bulgarian Committee for UNICEF plans to extend its support for the 1993 to 1994 school year, holding more training courses and making more materials and publications available.

Building language skills

Mrs. Penka Baltova, a psycholinguistics expert at Sofia University, guided the testing and analysis of the students' language skills. "Gypsy children are in a very bad position when they start school. They can't write or even say what the others already know, so they are considered stupid," she said.

"But now we've succeeded in showing that it is essentially bilingualism that causes problems for the Gypsy child — living in one country and one social context but with two cultures and two languages. In kindergarten we give them the vocabulary they need for primary school, mainly through plays and stories."

The President of the Bulgarian Committee for UNICEF, Professor Ivan Chernozemsky, a cancer research specialist and former Minister of Health, sees the project "breaking ground" for many other activities.

"The economy is difficult but we're not short of well-trained people," says Chernozemsky. "By showing what can be done for the Gypsies, we can show what can be done in many areas — for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, for example, and for a national plan of action for children.

"We must also promote a sense of tolerance among children. We can't afford hostility between different ethnic groups and we need to introduce our children to the history and culture of our neighbouring Balkan countries. That is the way we will eventually overcome our feelings of suspicion and mistrust."

Jack Glattbach is Senior Public Affairs Officer, UNICEF Geneva.

HEALTH NOTES

Kit to improve children's knowledge of medicines

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has developed a resource kit for use in schools to help children understand how medicines work, how to use them correctly and how all drugs can cause problems. Named 'Tay-Kair' for the endearing and inquisitive outer space character it introduces, the kit includes posters, a four-part video, a teacher's guide and supplementary resources. For further information, write to: Mrs. Joan Costanzo, National Health Promotion Officer, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Box 21, Curtin, Australian Capital Territory 2605, Australia. (Essential Drugs Monitor)

Kala-azar ravages southern Sudan

Civil war and famine have created conditions for an epidemic of leishmaniasis, also known as kala-azar, in the western upper Nile state of southern Sudan, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Symptoms of the disease, caused by a parasite transmitted by the sandfly, include prolonged fever, loss of weight, anaemia and enlargement of the spleen. "If untreated, all patients with clinical symptoms will die," says the WHO report. Reports by the aid organization Médecins sans Frontières suggest that as many as 40,000 persons may already have died. WHO estimated that about 400,000 persons are currently at risk of infection.

AIDS costs soar

The direct costs of AIDS to health and welfare services worldwide currently reach US$5 billion annually, according to Michael Merson of the World Health Organization (WHO). The costs due to loss of productivity, lost markets and training of replacement workers currently approach another US$50 billion.

A recent study predicts that by the year 2000, AIDS-related medical expenses and lost productivity will cost as much as US$500 billion per year.

WHO has chosen 'Time to Act' as the theme for World Aids Day 1993 (1 December), as a rallying call for urgent action. An estimated 13 million people now have HIV, and each day 5,000 more are infected.

Nigeria halves dracunculiasis cases in two years

Nigeria, which has the most cases of dracunculiasis (guinea worm disease) in the world, has a national plan of action to eradicate the age-old problem through careful monitoring, community education, case management and the provision of safe water. Efforts are paying off, with reported cases falling dramatically. Lessons from the successful programme can help propel the world closer to the mid-decade goal of eradication and end the crippling pain and disability of this preventable parasitic infection that affects, at the very minimum, 400,000 people in some of the least served and most isolated areas of the world.

The dracunculiasis parasite is carried by cyclops — a tiny crustacean, which infests ponds and other water sources. Here a child delights in safe water.

In Nigeria, drancunculiasis cases have dropped from nearly 400,000 in 1990 to just over 200,000 in 1992. In the last year alone, the number of villages afflicted has fallen by more than 1,000.

This progress has lessons for a number of countries in Africa and South Asia trying to eradicate the parasitic disease, transmitted through contaminated drinking water.

Keeping track

Annual case searches and monthly village-based reporting are the bedrock on which the country has built its Nigeria Guinea Worm Eradication Programme (NIGEP) — established in 1989 — with strong support from Global 2000 of the Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia, UNICEF and other partners. Only five of the 18 countries in which dracunculiasis is endemic have such detailed reporting systems in place, and all five are making dramatic progress towards eradication.

In Nigeria, detailed information is collected on water sources, health facilities, schools, disease prevalence and places of transmission by more than 6,000 village-based health workers in the 5,270 endemic villages. On this information base, and on knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) studies, the structure of change is being built.

Making water safe

Because the parasite that causes dracunculiasis is transmitted by contaminated drinking water, a safe drinking water source is crucial. The Nigerian Government began its programme by mandating all national and international agencies involved in water supply development to make dracunculiasis prevalence the basis on which to target water schemes.

Priority villages are those with populations of over 100 that have more than 20 dracunculiasis cases a year, the aim being to lower case rates in heavily endemic areas. Ultimately, all villages with more than five cases are to have a safe water supply, through the use of low-cost rigs or wells. Rainwater harvesting, spring catchment, filtration, and other technologies are to be used where rigs or wells are inappropriate.

The tiny crustacean that carries the parasite can be easily removed from water by filtration, and nylon filters have been distributed. A gift of US$91,000 from the Leventis Foundation in the US was used to buy sewing machines to produce filters locally, and in just over a year, 200,000 filters have been sewn.

Social pressure

Raising public awareness of how to prevent dracunculiasis is another important strategy. Over 15,000 school children have been educated and their teachers mobilized to support dracunculiasis eradication. Religious leaders have been sensitized and local artisans are encouraged to promote skills in clay pot manufacture. (Once filtered, water stored in clay pots and drawn on taps remains parasite free.) Thousands of nylon filters and water taps have been distributed to help protect household water.

As the mid-decade approaches, some weaknesses that will have to be addressed include the lagging motivation of some village health workers, whose vital work in spreading prevention messages needs to continue with renewed vigour. In response, one project initiated a bicycle incentive/award scheme.

Also, support may be needed in ensuring that the clearest possible health education materials reach communities in their local languages. A newly recruited health education specialist will help develop relevant activities in 16 states of Nigeria.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE NEWS

Australia: The UNICEF Committee of Australia announced that AMP, Australia's largest insurance company and an investor in shopping centres, is featuring the fund-raising campaign, 'Change for Kids', in its 15 shopping centres during October. This campaign, which benefits health programmes around the world through UNICEF, collected approximately US$145,000 in coin collection units in more than 200 shopping centres across Australia last October.

'Change for Good', another campaign, collects coins in foreign currency from air travellers, and is jointly run by UNICEF Australia and Quantas airlines. It was introduced in Frankfurt and Paris in September this year and Qantas plans to extend it to Hong Kong and Japan. The programme currently operates on routes between Sydney and Los Angeles, and Sydney and London.

Passengers are introduced to the campaign by an in-flight video that shows a '007' style message from Roger Moore and a message from Australian artist Ken Done. In the past two years, Quantas passengers have donated more than US$320,000 in foreign coins to help children in developing countries. Activities funded by the proceeds range from the construction of village wells, to vaccinations against measles, to supplying schools with books.

Canada: The President of the Canadian UNICEF Committee, Claudie Desmarais, announced in June that the organization's Halloween campaign, and its sales of cards and gifts and other fund-raising initiatives, together with voluntary contributions, totalled CAN$20.5 million (US$16.3 million) to benefit the world's most vulnerable children.

How to sustain immunization levels

Once the goal of immunizing 80 per cent of the world's children was achieved in 1990, finding ways to sustain and increase that coverage, given declining global resources, became the next challenge.

Vaccine self-sufficiency, development assistance and political commitment are the three most potent tools for meeting the challenge. Now, a strategy for putting them to the best use is emerging from the results of a UNICEF study into factors that made immunization campaigns successful.

Self-sufficiency

Vaccine self-sufficiency is a viable course for some countries, according to Santosh Mehrotra, the UNICEF economic analyst who conducted the study. Brazil, China and India, for example, have the necessary level of development, access to foreign exchange and a large enough child population to make it cost-effective to produce their own vaccines and cold-chain equipment.

"We need to encourage such countries to achieve self-sufficiency in vaccine production," he said in an interview. The political commitment that proved essential in raising coverage levels to reach the universal child immunization goal will continue to be crucial.

"Political commitment is needed to direct the focus towards domestic investment," said Mr. Mehrotra, to build up the necessary manufacturing infrastructure. The result will benefit the national economy and help other countries as well.

"Creating a climate that is favourable for investors will result in positive infrastructure development and promote economic growth, as well as lessen dependency on donor funds," he continued. "Once these countries begin producing vaccines and equipment, they won't need the same level of development support and this will release funds for the countries most 'at risk'.

Essential assistance to Africa

According to Mr. Mehrotra, the least developed countries of Africa, lacking the capacity to manufacture the vaccines and without foreign exchange, are those most at risk. Strong development assistance will be essential to ensure that the children in these countries do not suffer and that immunization levels, often achieved against great odds, remain high.

Political commitment, however, remains key. Algeria, Malaysia, Morocco and Tunisia, for example, all have small populations, which means it is not economically feasible for them to produce their own vaccines. Because they have sufficient foreign exchange to buy vaccines and cold-chain equipment on the world market, however, with adequate political commitment, they shouldn't have difficulty maintaining their immunization programmes, Mr. Mehrotra said.

The study shows that even countries hardest hit by problems of poverty, debt and structural adjustment were able to raise immunization levels when political commitment from the highest to the grass-roots levels was strong and constant. For instance, in Bangladesh, according to Mr. Mehrotra, 3 per cent of children were protected against measles in 1986; by 1990, 54 per cent were. In Uganda, measles coverage surged from 27 to 74 per cent and in Viet Nam from 38 to 87 per cent between 1986 and 1990.

Mexico campaign makes ORT priority

White flags are flying in Mexican communities, signalling hope for children suffering from diarrhoea.

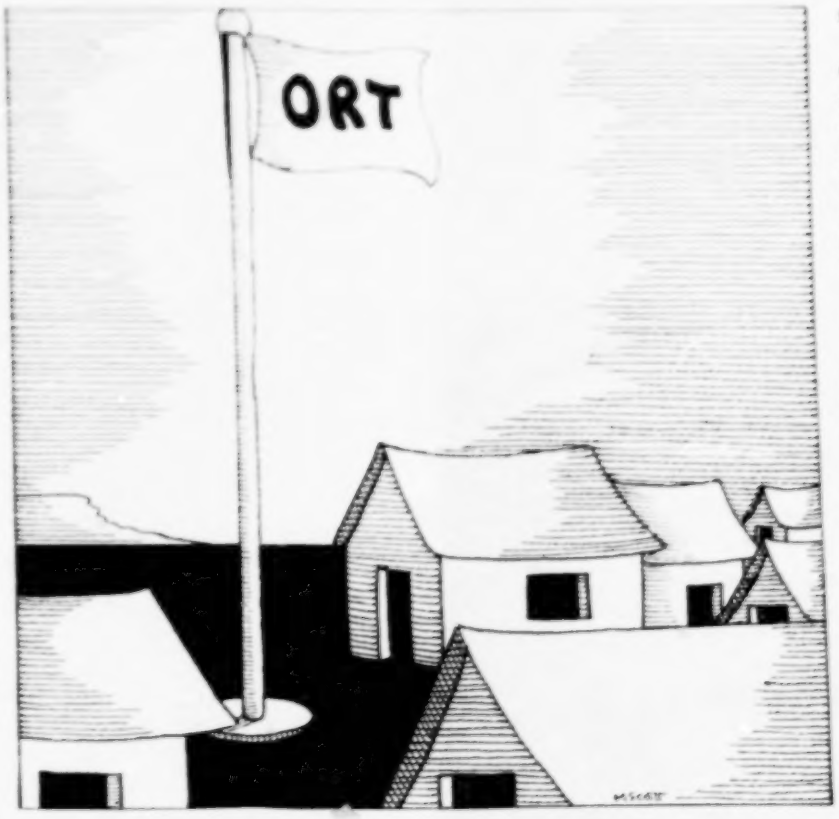
The flags identify the homes of community health promoters who are trained in the use of oral rehydration salts (ORS) to prevent the diarrhoeal dehydration that is all too often fatal in young children. These community health workers are part of a major campaign in Mexico that aims to halve the 1990 toll of diarrhoeal deaths in children under five years of age by the year 1994.

Mexico's commitment to the simple, low-cost technique of oral rehydration therapy (ORT) was made in October 1992 when Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari said his Government would extend the use of oral rehydration therapy to 80 per cent of all families by 1994.

In April 1993, the Mexican Government set up the National Council for the Control of Diarrhoeal Diseases (CONACED) as the next step in the integrated programme against diarrhoeal diseases.

CONACED's members include heads of Mexico's National Health and Education Systems and the National Water Commission, as well as representatives from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, the Junior League and the Mexican Foundation for Public Health.

State governments have set up 14 state councils headed by their respective governors to back the initiative, and



progress made in control of diarrhoeal diseases will be periodically presented at state forums and national meetings.

To ensure the widest outreach, the campaign is undertaking education and social mobilization on a vast scale. The Government is training more than 12 million women in ORT use and the proper management of diarrhoea. In high-risk areas, all women of child-bearing age will be trained. ORT units will be set up in hospitals and medical centres; the health system of the nation's armed forces will promote ORT, as will private companies.

Oral Rehydration Week

Twice a year, Mexico plans to hold a National Oral Rehydration Week for intense public education and mobilization on the use of ORS.

During the country's first successful Oral Rehydration Week, held in May, more than 14,000 education stands were set up, where nearly 1.5 million mothers and community members learned how to recognize the signs and symptoms of diarrhoeal diseases. Seven million ORS packets were distributed, along with instructions for preparation.

To reach all families, including the most vulnerable, teachers taught close to 15 million preschool and primary-age children about hygiene and correct food handling and discussed with them the advantages of oral rehydration therapy.

The Week demonstrated how effective coordination between the health and education sectors can be. Participants included the Ministry of Health's medical institutions, the Mexican Social Security Institute, the National System for Integral Family Development, the public sector Social Security Institute as well as the Ministry of Public Education, the National Water Commission and non-governmental bodies. The next Oral Rehydration Week will be held from November 15 to 19 this year.

Dr. Gonzalo Gutierrez, coordinator of CONACED, declared that the Government's goal for 1994 — of halving child mortality due to diarrhoea — will be achieved if Mexico continues its actions.

This article is adapted from Tequio Newsletter (June 1993), *published by UNICEF Mexico.*

Mayors make a difference

Day-care services, nutrition programmes and children's fora — these are some of the ways local authorities are improving children's lives in towns and cities around the world. The commitment of mayors and local officials is growing, as was evident at the Second International Colloquium of Mayors, held on 5 to 6 July in Mexico City, in which 80 mayors from around the world participated.

The following two stories describe how mayors in Haiti and Colombia are helping children.

Immunization initiative in Haiti

By Sergio Guimaraes

The social and political crisis that has ravaged Haiti over the past two years has made it impossible to immunize children systematically, and new cases of measles and other childhood diseases are reported daily. In many areas of the country, and particularly in the capital city — where only 10 per cent of the infant population has been immunized — the threat of an epidemic is imminent.

Earlier this year, mayors of four municipalities in the metropolitan area — Carrefour, Delmas, Pétion-Ville and Port-au-Prince — organized an immunization campaign to protect children in their communities.

The campaign was conducted in phases, beginning in Carrefour and Delmas. In each municipality a committee was formed, composed of people responsible for training volunteers, for logistics, technical supervision, the distribution of immunization materials and meals to the volunteers and to do public relations work. The goal was to conduct three communal vaccination days.

Community members were actively involved, with teachers alerting their students, who in turn informed their parents. The Catholic Church, Protestant ministers and Voodoo priests, as well as other religious leaders, mobilized their faithful.

Many businessmen contributed money and products, and over 1,000 volunteers helped in the immunization centres.

Thousands of leaflets and posters were distributed and banners displayed, but priority was given to notifying people by word of mouth and radio because of the high illiteracy rate and the intermittent lack of electricity.

Besides the messages broadcast by several local radio stations and two national television networks, sound trucks scoured Carrefour and Delmas during the week prior to each communal immunization day.

Success sets example

The response was excellent. Organizers had expected 100 children and 70 women at each of the 65 immunization centres on the first immunization day. By mid-afternoon, the centres were overflowing, many of them receiving more than 200 children. The demand for immunization continued to be strong throughout the entire campaign in the four municipalities. When the campaign ended, thousands of children had been vaccinated.

The example of the metropolitan mayors is already being followed in the Haitian hinterland and in Plateau Central and Artibonite, where over 40 mayors have shown an interest in promoting immunization days.

Sergio Guimaraes is Communications Officer, UNICEF Port-au-Prince.

The Second International Colloquium of Mayors as Defenders of Children. From left: Richard Reid, UNICEF Director of Public Affairs; Anne Makinda, Tanzania's Minister of Community Development for Women's and Children's Affairs; James P. Grant, UNICEF Executive Director; Manuel Camacho Solis, Mayor of Mexico City; and Mamadou Diop, Mayor of Dakar.

Putting children first in Ibague, Colombia

By Juan Fernando Aguirre

In Ibague, the capital of the department of Tolima in Colombia, children have benefits — and some responsibilities — that they didn't have before.

Thanks to the efforts of Mayor Ruben Dario Rodriguez, whose administration's motto is 'Children First', and his immediate predecessor, children in the city now receive a free glass of milk every day; they have an ombudsman and advocate; and they play a greater role in managing their own schools.

I discussed these achievements in August, when the Mayor of Ibague came to report on the progress made towards achieving the goals established in the country's plan of action for children.

The Mayor emphasized that the children of Ibague had played an active role in city programmes. To ensure future participation, an outstanding youth leader, Jenny Helena Rojas, is heading training courses to develop other child leaders in the community.

Jenny and other children, together with the Mayor, were expected to visit the UNICEF office in Bogota in September, to learn about UNICEF cooperation programmes with the Colombian Government and help them identify ways they, as young people, could support similar programmes.

Juan Fernando Aguirre is UNICEF Representative for Colombia and Venezuela.

Seminar calls for action to end child labour

By Maggie Black

All over the developing world, children earn money on cobblestone walks and alleyways, in markets and train stations: as shoeshiners, barrow-boys, car attendants and diminutive vendors of everything from trinkets to chewing-gum, newspapers to sexual favours.

These children, highly visible and often exposed to violence and abuse, have commanded growing attention from welfare workers, child activists and the media, and by doing so have helped open a window on the vast but largely invisible issue of child work.

Thirty-four representatives of international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governments assembled early this year in Florence (Italy) at the UNICEF International Child Development Centre to study the increasingly acute problems of all 'Street and Working Children'.

A major theme to emerge from the seminar was that the needs of 'invisible' child workers — those who are, by definition, *not* on the street — have been neglected compared to the more visible children who are.

Most child workers — no one knows how many there are but the International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates at least 100 million — are employed in cottage industries and sweatshops, mines and plantations, back-room bars and kitchen quarters. In these unregulated workplaces, they are most at risk of accident, health damage and exploitation; they are hardest to reach and easily ignored.

Major development issue

No one who attended the seminar came away believing that children's economic activity is less than a major development issue. More importantly still, participants became convinced that proper understanding of the phenomenon was essential to the survival, health and education of all children in vulnerable low-income families. Child workers between the ages of 6 and 14 are most likely to be poorly nourished, most vulnerable to disease and early pregnancy, and less educated. Their under five brothers and sisters are also in developmental jeopardy.

Yet the economic role of children in the developing world has been ignored because it does not fit comfortably with the modern idea of childhood as a long period of dependency and preparation for activities — work and procreation — designated 'adults only'. In most families in the developing world, however, this is an unreal division. Children work from a young age to help their parents provide necessities for survival, or share their mothers' heavy domestic burden.

Other myths about the working child are crumbling under the weight of experience and research. For example, studies in Latin America and elsewhere reveal that 90 per cent of street children go home to sleep. Stereotypes about 'victims' and 'exploiters' cannot be relied upon. Parents and teachers — regarded as the child's main protectors — are sometimes responsible for propelling children into work, prostitution or crime. Police and employers — perceived traditionally as the street child's enemy — can become allies and protectors.

Harder times

Many seminar participants, notably those from Ecuador and Peru, brought evidence of the drastic impact of structural adjustment programmes on children's working lives.

The mounting unemployment, lower incomes and reduced purchasing power associated with these programmes are forcing many families to fall back on the earning potential of even their youngest members.

The predicament of children on the street is often a final outcome of poverty, joblessness, loss of parental self-esteem, unwanted pregnancies, alcoholism, family rupture, violence, abuse and despair. Thus, the phenomenon of street and working children is closely associated with adjustment to deteriorating circumstances at family level.

Strong ILO participation

An important feature of the seminar was the strong participation of representatives from ILO, the leading international expert in the field. For some years following its foundation in 1919, ILO was extremely active in the field of child labour. In 1973, it prompted the resurgence of the issue with the passage of the Convention Concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (Convention 138) by the International Labour Conference. Since then it has had many policy and programme initiatives.

By contrast, UNICEF's involvement in the predicament of working children and the broader category of children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC) is relatively recent. Advocacy within UNICEF was pioneered in Latin America in the early 1980s by the late Peter Tacon, with UNICEF policy first articulated in 1986.

Subsequently, a number of country programmes have embraced activities for street and working children in partnership both with governments and NGOs, in the context either of urban basic education, or a specific programme for CEDC.

The special role of NGOs in opening up issues concerning child exploitation was recognized by seminar participants, some of whom represented NGOs. Many of their projects have blazed new educational trails, experimented with new tactics for prevention or protection, developed special 'street primary health care' and gained publicity for the plight of working children. NGOs have also promoted children's own participation in programmes and advocacy.

The seminar set out to learn as much as possible from the experiences of organizations such as the Undugu Society of Kenya, Proyecto Alternativo in Honduras and Childhope Asia in helping drug abusing children and those in conflict with the law.

Goals altered

The sharpening of programme skills was one of the seminar's aims, but the concept of programme applied by the seminar extended far beyond service delivery. Advocacy and legislative change were considered intrinsic; new public and private sector partners need to be found.

Above all, participants concluded, the issue of the working child must be taken out of the backwater of small-scale, welfarist concern and placed firmly on the development agenda. The means of so doing are ready at hand: the Convention on the Rights of the Child and one of the major goals for children for the year 2000, established at the 1990 World Summit for Children, which calls for "improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances." These provide an impetus for national legislative action and a policy-making framework of immense strategic importance.

Improving the lives of working children, and gradually ending their presence in both visible and invisible workplaces, will be far from easy. But by the year 2000, those who took part may look back on the seminar as the launch pad for a 'Grand Alliance for Working Children'. Between now and then, such a network could do much for some of the most exploited human beings in the world.

Maggie Black was the rapporteur of the Seminar.

UNICEF NEWS

Illustration award

The search for national candidates for the 1994 Ezra Jack Keats International Award for Excellence in Children's Book Illustration is currently under way. The award, named after the internationally recognized American illustrator of children's literature, honours and encourages innovative illustrators of children's books. The recipients will be selected by an international jury which will meet in June 1994 to review all of the nominations.

New network in Colombia

UNICEF Bogota recently signed an agreement with the Colombian Government to help develop a third television channel for public interest broadcasting. Programmes will promote social mobilization in such areas as health care and education, and include daily time slots for women, youth and children. UNICEF offices in Cuba and Mexico have already begun to collaborate on developing suitable programmes, including one on water and sanitation. For more information, contact Azriel Bibliowiesz, Information/Communications Officer, UNICEF TACRO Bogota. Fax: 571-312.0085.

Last year a survey revealed that 900 children were sleeping in the streets of Rio de Janeiro alone.

Lisbet Palme denounces murder of street children

Lisbet Palme, Chairperson of the Swedish Committee for UNICEF, has called for international pressure to be placed on Brazil to combat the killing of street children in the country's cities, by identifying and trying child attackers in court. Sweden gives US$1.5 million a year to support projects aimed at helping Brazil's street children.

Ms. Palme made the plea after eight homeless boys were killed and two others were wounded in the early hours of 23 July, as they slept on the grass in front of a church in Rio de Janeiro. The boys were the latest victims in an escalating campaign of terror targeting children who live on the streets.

Children are being killed in Rio this year at twice the 1991 rate, according to statistics collected by the Centre for Representation of Marginalized Peoples, a private social welfare group in the city. During the first half of 1993, the number of children killed in Rio alone had already reached 320, according to police records.

The National Movement of Street Children reports an average of two killings per day.

Killers are believed to be rogue policemen, security guards, organized crime groups and teenage gangs who are rarely caught and punished.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE NEWS

Finland: Students of a Swedish language secondary school in Helsinki initiated a project to benefit children in developing countries. Using cord that is used to tie bales of hay, the students made 200 wreaths and sent them to Finland's Members of Parliament. The MPs were asked to decorate the wreaths with Christmas in mind and return them to the school for an exhibition, after which they were sold for 100 Finnish marks each (US$20).

The students also sent bale cord to over 70 public figures, artists, writers, scientists, state and church officials, heads of large companies and sports people, asking them to make something artistic or practical. Over 80 imaginative objects were auctioned off. The project raised US$10,000 for UNICEF.

New Zealand: The Committee's massive public appeal to raise funds for the victims of war in former Yugoslavia has motivated individual schools and community groups throughout the country to a level UNICEF has never before experienced in New Zealand. The presentation of a government cheque valued at approximately US$55,000 kicked off the campaign during a launching ceremony that received extensive media coverage.

However, it was a powerful television interview with a 16-year-old girl, Melissa, on the country's top-rated nightly current affairs programme, *Holmes*, that generated the strongest response. Melissa talked about trying to survive in a city under siege and asked viewers to send donations, cards, letters, pencils and paper for use in an improvised school.

The *Holmes* show subsequently encouraged schools to write letters and to send in pencils with their donations. In a little over a week, the Committee received over 8 kilogrammes of letters and cards from New Zealand children for the children in former Yugoslavia and an unprecedented level of donations. The interview and follow-up shows on *Holmes* have been edited to a 15-minute video for use in a direct mail campaign to New Zealand's top 500 corporations.

United Kingdom: An innovative advertisement by the Committee explains how UNICEF encourages the use of traditional 'pumpkin carriages' to keep vaccines cool in rural China without benefit of electricity. By scooping out the insides of pumpkins and then packing them with ice, vaccines can be chilled in them for up to a week. On average a single pumpkin carries enough vaccine to immunize 100 children. The campaign plays on the Cinderella theme: A photo of an ice-filled pumpkin is accompanied by the tag line, "Help us turn a pumpkin into a life-saver."

The Committee's new education package — entitled *'Who Are the Street Children?'* — looks at why there are street children in Brazil, who they are and how they can be helped. It includes 28 colour slides and 10 black-and-white photographs as well as a 32-page teacher's book that provides historical and geographical background of Brazil, up-to-date facts and statistics about the country's street children, and case histories for group discussions. Available from the United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF, 55 Lincolns Inn Fields, London WC2A 3NB, UK. Telephone: (44-71) 405 55 92. It costs £8.95 plus 15 per cent postage and packaging.

Ceará keeps promise to children

The government and people of Ceará, a Brazilian state, succeeded in reducing child mortality by a third in three years, a feat that won them the 1993 Maurice Pate Award, given by UNICEF for efforts on behalf of children. It was the first time the Award has gone to people and their government rather than an institution. The current and former Governors, Ciro Gomes and Tasso Jereissati, respectively, and Maria Elierza Ferreira, President of the Association of Health Agents of Ceará, and three church and community workers received the Award on behalf of the state. FAY HAUSSMAN, who travelled recently to Ceará, reports on the continuing success.

More than 7,000 community health agents monitor the health of 183 communities in Ceara. Here a health worker pays a call on a mother and her child.

Ceará, a state in the northeast of Brazil, has a largely unbroken tradition of misery, precarious living conditions and chronic illnesses for most of its people.

Yet in 1986, a quiet revolution started in Ceará that has helped improve children's health and transform people's lives. It began with the election of Governor Tasso Jereissati, a wealthy industrialist, who started an extraordinary programme called *Viva Criança* or 'Long Live the Child', to counter Ceará's devastating infant mortality rate.

The programme was a response to a survey, done among more than 8,000 families in 131 municipalities, showing that most infants who had died had never received any medical attention. Nearly two thirds of them had not been immunized against the common vaccine-preventable diseases. Another random survey among 142 mothers revealed that 81 of the mothers had lost a baby younger than five months old to dehydration due to diarrhoea.

Turning the tide

In early 1987, Governor Jereissati modernized hospitals, greatly increased the number of health centres throughout the state and bought essential equipment such as ambulances, stretchers and scales.

He also expanded and adapted health education programmes, which community health agents were running among Ceará's poor and rural families, hiring more than 6,000 new health agents, nearly all of them women, to work in 118 municipalities for 6 to 12 months.

After two weeks' training, they were sent on their rounds in Ceará's arid interior, where they vaccinated babies and showed mothers how to add chlorine to the water to prevent cholera. They taught women how to mix water, salt and sugar to fight diarrhoeal dehydration and about the advantages of exclusive breastfeeding until infants were at least four months old. They encouraged mothers to take their children to the nearest health post for a complete check-up.

The health workers were paid a minimum salary of about US$65 a month, out of emergency monies the federal Government was providing for drought relief. When the drought ended in 1988 and the emergency programmes — and funding — were discontinued, community pressure and the results of the programme prompted the state government to take over the financing.

With the support of UNICEF, several changes were made to transform the programme into a true community health agents' programme in municipalities across the state. Agents were selected from among the members of the community, promoting direct community involvement.

Today, 7,350 health agents work in 183 communities, mostly in the interior of Ceará, assisting about 4 million people. In rural communities, each agent monitors the health and sanitary conditions of 100 to 150 families. Training has been extended to 90 days, and one-week refresher courses are provided periodically.

Icapui's success

An example of the programme's remarkable success can be seen in the rural municipality of Icapui, established in 1985, where 32 health agents and 7 health posts assist 13,655 people. Between 1986 and 1992, its first two ***mayors made the improvement of inadequate*** schooling and health services priority goals.

The success in both areas has been impressive. Total enrolment in grades 1 to 11 has risen from 900 in 1985 to 4,700 in 1993, with free bus transportation available for every student. For its achievements in education, Icapui received the national UNICEF Brazil 'Child and Peace' award in 1991.

And Icapui's infant death rate is today among the lowest in Latin America. In Redonda, a community on the Atlantic coast, for example, no diarrhoeal deaths were reported between January and April 1993, a normally difficult time for the communities' 474 families, who make their living through lobster fishing. Every year during this period no lobsters can be caught. Before the programme began, poor sanitary conditions further aggravated the children's hunger and ill health.

With pride, Maria do Carmo, 'Carminha', one of Redonda's health agents, introduced a visitor to her neighbours. One, Acacia Regina, is breastfeeding her first newborn. The family's water comes from the township water system and has been chlorinated, she says. Carminha, who gave Acacia prenatal care, is also vaccinating her and other women of the community along with the children, since Acacia, like many women, was not vaccinated as a child.

While the residents are not sure how many have access to town water, one neighbour says, "All those who don't have it yet have filters installed. We bought the first few filters ourselves, but when we asked the Mayor, he immediately sent enough filters for all."

State support for communities

In Fortaleza, the state capital, the different stages of *Viva Criança* are coordinated by Dr. Regina Portella, who has an office in the modern Albert Sabin Children's Hospital. Mothers of all income levels are welcome to bring their children here, where, if not in need of a doctor's attention for an injury or serious illness, they are seen quickly by a registered nurse or a health agent.

Not too far away, in Ceará's first neighbourhood nutrition centre, malnourished children are fed, washed and observed by health workers. Mothers are told about the advantages of breastfeeding.

In a training centre across the road, health agents receive periodic retraining while assistant nurses and auxiliaries are also being trained to work in the 30 new nutrition centres to be opened throughout Ceará by the end of this year.

Periodically, someone will urge ***Governor Ciro Gomes to turn the municipally*** supervised health agents into state employees. He always refuses. "If you turn these community workers into public employees, the programme will die," he says each time.

Community involvement is the linchpin to *Viva Criança's* success.

Fay Haussman is a journalist and co-chairperson of the University Seminar on Brazil, Columbia University, New York.

UNICEF NEWS

Workshop on children and culture

The Ministry of Education in Syria, in cooperation with UNICEF Damascus, held a workshop in May, designed to raise awareness about children's cultural needs. It was the first of its kind in Syria.

Educators, government officials and child advocates addressed a number of issues including the poor state of children's libraries and of print and broadcast media targeted to them, and inadequate translations of children's literature. Suggestions were made to create an institute that addresses child culture as well as to provide theatres and museums for children, adjust the educational curriculum and develop plans for publishing more children's literature.

UNICEF Damascus also played a significant role in the national Pioneer Festival held in April in Homs, a Syrian governorate. The Pioneer organization, an international youth group, has 2.5 million participants ranging in age from 7 to 12.

Children visiting from African countries including Mali, Senegal, Somalia and South Africa greeted New York state's First Lady Matilda Cuomo on the Day of the African Child.

IN NEW YORK

Decade of the Child supports families

By Alexia Lewnes

On 16 June 1993 New York City school children from Brooklyn celebrated the Day of the African Child at the United Nations. They also had a chance to thank First Lady Matilda Cuomo, wife of New York Governor Mario Cuomo — who attended some of the festivities — for her help in obtaining funding to support African-American programmes for children in New York.

Those familiar with Mrs. Cuomo's work were not surprised. For years, she has played a pivotal role in Governor Cuomo's 'Decade of the Child'. This statewide initiative, launched by the Governor in 1988, works to keep families together and help children stay on the right track for success for life.

"It's a long-term commitment that harnesses more than 160 programmes from all state agencies under one umbrella," said Mrs. Cuomo in an interview about the Decade. "It acknowledges that governments, families, communities and businesses must join together in a common mission."

Helping preserve the family

A teacher by training and mother of five children, Matilda Cuomo was a natural choice when the Governor asked her to become Honorary Chair of the Council on Children in Families when he became Governor in 1983. "The First Spouse can quickly bring interest and public awareness to an issue that needs attention," Mrs. Cuomo said about her role.

Since 1988, the state of New York has spent more than US$5 billion on programmes and services that maintain and protect children and their families. This year, more than US$1 billion will go towards education, health, day care, adoption, youth delinquency prevention and substance abuse activities.

"We're really concentrating on family preservation and keeping that family unified, strong, healthy and working on solving problems," says Mrs. Cuomo. "It's within the family that children learn the values and attitudes that will help them deal with the problems they will face in life."

Overhauling the foster care system and finding children permanent homes through adoption are Matilda Cuomo's priorities today. New York state, where 1,000 children are currently awaiting adoption, hopes to place children in adoptive homes within a year after their own families break down, according to Mrs. Cuomo.

The goal has recently become more attainable with a US$100,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation, awarded to the state of New York to explore ways to improve the adoption system. The funds will support the New York State Families For Kids Initiative, headed by Mrs. Cuomo. "The Kellogg grant will help us improve our efforts to place every child awaiting adoption in a loving home," says Mrs. Cuomo. "Kids thrive better within a family and that's what we're trying to help them do."

Call for information

A toll-free Decade of the Child Information Line (1-800-345-KIDS) serves as a central clearing-house for all children's programmes in the state. Run by the New York State Department of Social Services, it provides callers with the most up-to-date information on programmes to assist children and families. The line is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Editor's note: First Lady Matilda Cuomo is Honorary Chair of the New York State Council on Children and Families, Chair of Adoption in New York state, Chair of New York State Citizens' Children's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, and the founder of the New York State Mentoring Program.

Alexia Lewnes is a consultant writer and editor for UNICEF New York.

US programme fights child poverty

An experiment started five years ago in New York state aims to help children escape from poverty by providing incentives to single mothers to help them become financially self-sufficient.

The Child Assistance Program (CAP) is based on the philosophy that a child is the financial responsibility of both the custodial parent and the absent parent.

Work, a key factor in CAP, is encouraged by allowing participants to keep a greater percentage of their total income than is permitted by Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the traditional system of financial support for poor children in single-parent families. AFDC limits income by reducing benefits by one dollar for every dollar of income earned.

CAP encourages participants to build savings, unlike AFDC, which places strict limits on the assets participants are permitted. CAP also continues supplemental government assistance until the family is above the poverty level.

"Children are truly benefiting from this programme," says First Lady Matilda Cuomo. "When children see their parents working, it enhances their own self-esteem and sense of independence."

The results of the first major study of CAP, released last year, show that welfare recipients in the CAP programme worked 25 per cent more hours and earned 25 per cent more in wages than AFDC recipients.

The success of CAP has captured national attention. In 1992, it was one of 10 programmes selected for the 1992 Innovations in State and Local Government Award.

More than 4,000 families in seven counties of New York state have participated in CAP, which will be introduced in New York City at the end of this year.

Revisiting their roots

The Roots Revisited programme, which began in 1984, aims to increase students' self-esteem through the study of their African-American heritage. Funding is provided by New York state and is supplemented by grants and fund-raising efforts by parents, students and staff.

During the school year, students participate in monthly two-hour extra-curricular workshops where they learn about African-American communities in the US and the role of Africa in world history. They attend lectures, visit museums and historical sights, and interview older members of their community.

The year culminates in a field trip to a place they have studied. In the past, students have visited countries in Africa, and Latin and South America, as well as southern US states.

Roots Revisited also sponsors a College Awareness Project which takes elementary and junior high students to college campuses to meet students and learn about campus life.

After the visits, students receive career counselling.

Children cutting edge of human rights

Excerpts from a speech by STEPHEN S. LEWIS, Special Representative of James P. Grant, the Executive Director of UNICEF, and speaking on his behalf, at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June 1993.

On women and the girl child:

It seems fair to say that the agenda of the international women's movement has been embraced as never before.

UNICEF is delighted with this turn of events for three primary reasons. First, the breakthrough on women's rights is incomparably overdue, and is finally being expressed as the entire panoply of rights covering every aspect of women's experience. Second, because any significant improvement in the status of women cannot but benefit the status of children. Third, because inevitably, as the rights of women are affirmed and protected, so too are the inseparable rights of the girl-child acknowledged. Gender does not begin at the age of eighteen.

On children:

Viewing children as the cutting edge of human rights, and of our many ongoing efforts in diverse fields of development, could contribute more to international peace and security, and more to democracy, development and the environment, even to preventing crises and conflicts, in a shorter period of time and at a far lower cost than any other set of doable actions aimed at remedying global problems on the threshold of the 21st century.

We all are interdependent neighbours, and it is unconscionable to believe that we can continue to live, side by side, amidst the kind of obscene disparities in wealth, health and levels of freedom and participation that exist today. Radically narrowing those disparities is not only an ethical priority of the highest order, it is increasingly a question of global survival.

We can jumpstart the process of narrowing these disparities by breaking what we call poverty's 'inner cycle' early in the lives of its victims, whose illnesses, poor growth and illiteracy are some of the most fundamental causes, as well as some of the most severe symptoms, of poverty and underdevelopment. Our capacity to place a bubble of protection around the most vulnerable months and years of millions of children has increased exponentially over the past decade, and as this capacity has grown, it has become unacceptable, ethically, not to use that capacity, or to exclude nations, communities or individuals from the benefits of progress.

Urged by the Conference to end all forms of discrimination against girls, States will need to reduce the gap between boys' and girls' primary enrolment rates. Here two girls attend school in the Dominican Republic.

Advance at Human Rights Conference

continued from page 1

on a vast range of abuses, some personal, others political or cultural — many resulting from the growing poverty and civil unrest in their nations. Moving testimonies highlighted such problems as domestic violence, the trafficking in women, and genital mutilation, dramatically reinforcing the need to end a series of acute human rights abuses suffered by women simply because they are women.

Recommendations for women

In the end, the Vienna Declaration urged the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women, both hidden and overt. It stressed the importance of eliminating violence against women in public and private life, as well as all forms of sexual harassment, exploitation, trafficking and gender bias. It called on the UN General Assembly to adopt the draft declaration on violence against women and encouraged universal ratification, by the year 2000 of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. In addition, it supported the creation of a new mechanism, a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.

"There was a very real sense with the women's movement that there would be policy and legislative changes that reflected the force of their argument," says Mr. Lewis. "Any significant improvement in the status of women could only benefit the status of children. As the rights of women were reaffirmed, the inseparable rights of the girl child were also acknowledged."

Progress made on child rights

The child rights agenda was also reinforced, although not as dramatically as that of women. The presence of children caught many of the delegates off guard, but their pleas were heard. On 21 June, designated by the Conference as Child Rights Day, more than 200 children attending the plenary session appealed to world leaders to stop their suffering. "All children deserve the chance to live, to laugh, to play, to be safe," said Sleepy Eyes Sharon La Framboise, a 16-year-old Seneca Sioux Indian boy, of the Coalition of the Children of the Earth. "Probably no leaders in the Conference hall had had to carry a gun when they were eight years old, see their family killed or beg in the streets," he said.

Throughout the Conference, fervent appeals were made to the delegates to consider the plight of children around the world. Among several speakers focusing on children's issues and the need to protect their rights were former US President Jimmy Carter, Gambian President Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO Yasser Arafat, HRH Crown Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, and Ibrahima Fall, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights.

Recommendations for children

While the final Declaration pushed the children's agenda forward, the breakthrough was less dramatic for children than for women since children had experienced their major victory three years earlier at the World Summit for Children. Vienna reaffirmed that victory and gave it added impetus. It urged universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by 1995, and called on all States to integrate it into their national action plans. It called for effective measures to combat the exploitation and abuse of children, including such practices as female infanticide, harmful child labour, sale of children and their organs, child prostitution, child pornography and other forms of sexual abuse. It supported, in particular, measures to promote the human rights of the girl child and to protect children in armed conflicts.

"The Conference took us one more step forward. It's part of the process of constantly reaffirming everything UNICEF believes in for children, month after month, year after year, until it becomes inescapable and the conventional conversation of the day in country after country," says Mr. Lewis.

The successful child rights movement is a model from which lessons can be learned. No human rights treaty has had such a positive response as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was adopted by the UN General Assembly in November 1989 and by early September 1993 had already been ratified by 147 countries. A 10-person committee to monitor its implementation recently concluded its third session and has begun to discuss State reports.

With the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the international community was able, for the first time, to bridge the ideological gulf that has traditionally separated civil and political rights from economic, social and cultural rights. These rights, the Convention declared, are indivisible — economic and social rights must have equal status with political and civil rights.

Right to development reaffirmed

The Vienna Conference recognized that it is essential to extend to adults the consensus achieved on the indivisibility of children's rights. In a major victory for developing countries, the United States, the sole country that had not signed the Declaration of the Right to Development in 1986, accepted the principle of indivisibility and recognized a country's "inalienable right to development."

Only through development, it was reaffirmed throughout the Conference, can poor nations break the cycle of poverty that traps their people. And it became clear that "poverty," as stated in the final Declaration, does, in fact, "inhibit the full and effective enjoyment of human rights."

Extreme poverty prevents families and nations from providing even a minimum of care for children, UNICEF reminded participants. Each day, 35,000 children die mostly from preventable causes relating to malnutrition and common illnesses.

While it may come as a surprise that the rights of women and children had been addressed 25 years earlier at the first International Human Rights Conference in Tehran, and included in the resolutions adopted at that 1968 Conference, it is clear that the pronouncements of Tehran have become a reality at Vienna. The hopeful nostrums of yesterday were legitimized in the Declaration, which concretely defines the issues and, more significantly, calls for action.

The Vienna Programme of Action is a blueprint to help States map a strategy to implement the changes needed to guarantee human rights for their people. Like the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children and the Rio Declaration that resulted from the 1992 Earth Summit, Vienna's Programme of Action is yet another affirmation that a statement of principles must be reinforced with guidelines for implementation and monitoring.

The World Summit for Children unleashed a new energy that reminded the international community that only by addressing issues in a concrete way can change occur. That same energy galvanized the delegates in Vienna where there appeared to be less political posturing than had been anticipated and more thought-provoking discussions. Governments were forced to grapple with the issues and to recognize one another's points of view.

Clearly, the consensus that was reached regarding a country's right to development will not improve the human condition overnight. Nor will women and children break free tomorrow from the injustices they are faced with today. The Vienna Conference is simply another step that pushes the human rights agenda forward. As incremental as the step may seem, it is one that moves us closer to ensuring justice for all.

Perhaps what was most significant about Vienna was that people's awareness of their "right" to human rights seemed to be growing — a movement that is probably more important than the Conference itself.

Shalini Dewan, Chief of the Editorial, Publications and Photo Section, Division of Information, UNICEF New York, attended the World Conference on Human Rights.

Conference highlights

Seven thousand participants, including representatives from 171 States and more than 800 non-governmental organizations, as well as from academic and national institutions, gathered in Vienna for the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, organized by the Centre for Human Rights.

The final 70-page document, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, is a compromise text that provides hope for the future.

Delegates reconfirmed several basic principles:

- States must commit to promote and protect human rights regardless of their political, economic and cultural system. The universal nature of these rights and freedoms is beyond question;
- economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights are all important and interrelated. The right to development is a universal and inalienable right;
- national sovereignty is no barrier to UN and other outside monitoring of the human rights' observance of States.

The Declaration also:

- supports the idea of establishing a High Commissioner for Human Rights.

On women:

- calls upon the UN General Assembly to adopt the draft Declaration on Violence Against Women and urges States to combat violence against women;
- calls for universal ratification by all States of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women by the year 2000. Currently 125 States have ratified the Convention;
- supports the creation of a new mechanism, a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.

On children:

- calls for universal ratification by all States of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by 1995 and the universal signing of the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action;
- urges States to repeal existing laws and regulations and remove customs and practices which discriminate against and cause harm to the girl child;
- supports the proposal that the Secretary-General initiate a study into means of improving the protection of children in armed conflicts.

Protecting children in war

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all, enforced. A major UN study of how to protect children in war was thus proposed and endorsed at the NGO/UN Consultation in New York in March 1993, a proposal that eventually became a major influence on the World Conference.

Ways to protect children

The final document continues "...Humanitarian norms should be implemented and measures taken in order to protect and facilitate assistance to children in war zones. Measures should include protection for children against indiscriminate use of all weapons of war, especially anti-personnel mines..."

Measures to protect children do not depend on material resources, but rather political and *moral* will. The proposed UN review should be more than a routine exercise. The review should be broad and address the shortcomings of existing norms as well as ways to make the UNICEF proposal for a 'zone of peace' real.

A high-powered commission should be established and given means to tackle this whole problem. Relevant UN bodies, including UNICEF, the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) and the Department for Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross and several other non-governmental organizations should be involved.

Beyond this, ways to improve the care for refugee children and others victimized by war should be analysed. As the Declaration states, "...The need for after-care and rehabilitation of children traumatized by war must be addressed urgently..."

Child soldiers need protection

Children who have been forced or manipulated into a combat role are often severely traumatized. This is one of the worst violations of the rights of the child. The final document states, "...The Conference calls upon the Committee on the Rights of the Child to study the question of raising the minimum age of recruitment of armed forces."

The Committee has already looked into this question and has drafted a proposal for an optional protocol to the Convention, which governments could ratify, that would raise the minimum age of recruitment into armies to age 18.

The General Assembly has now reconvened and it will discuss how to follow up on the Vienna recommendations. We hope it will do more than pay lip service to the major study proposed for the protection of children in armed conflicts.

Thomas Hammarberg is a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and also represented the NGO Committee on UNICEF at the World Conference on Human Rights.

Breastfeeding: The facts

Approximately 12,000 newborns in the developing world die each day, 4.3 million each year. Appropriate early care can help lower this toll and among the simplest forms of such care is breastfeeding. At a joint meeting in Rio de Janeiro of the International Pediatric Association, the World Health Organization and UNICEF on 'Global Priorities in Newborn Health', RICHARD REID, Director of the Division of Public Affairs at UNICEF, New York, addressed the subject.

Stressing that breastfeeding promises the only safe, direct passage to good health and steady development for children, Mr. Reid called for a global movement to reclaim this misunderstood practice. Below are excerpts from his presentation.

The full facts about breastfeeding aren't simple. But the argument can be simply put: The fundamental needs of newborns and children are the same everywhere, and breastfeeding starts to fulfil many of those needs during a baby's very first hour of life.

Depending upon where babies are born, they may derive different benefits from among the many that breastfeeding has to offer, but the practice is important in developing and industrial countries alike.

For instance, recent studies show that children who were fed breastmilk as infants later average eight points higher on intelligence quotient tests, that breastfed youngsters are more assertive, more outgoing, exhibit higher self-esteem and move along the developmental scale more rapidly; and that they are 10 times less likely than bottle-fed babies to be brought back to hospitals for bacterial infections in the first year of life.

Children who are breastfed for at least four months tend to have overall reduced rates of childhood cancers, including leukemia and lymphoma. Compared with those who are fed with bottles, they are less likely to show symptoms of asthma, dermatitis, to suffer from gastrointestinal disturbances, or to contract middle-ear disease, and they have a lower risk of childhood diabetes.

Dangers of formula dependency

The fact today is that too many hospitals have developed an infant formula 'habit', taking the decision about how and what to feed a baby out of the hands of the mother. Hospital practices that inform women about the benefits of breastfeeding and offer help and encouragement have in many places been replaced with the unhealthy assumption that bottle-feeding is the 'norm'.

For poor families everywhere, bottle-feeding means forfeiting scarce household income, a readily available source of a perfectly balanced infant diet and protection against disease and infection that no inoculation can provide.

Need to change attitudes

It is time to do the courageous thing, to restore to mothers their rights to know of and decide about infant feeding. It is time for every sector of society responsible for the detour towards bottle-feeding to account and redirect.

In developing and industrialized countries, entire societies will have to begin again to recognize breastfeeding as one of life's miracles, not as something outmoded and only to be practised behind closed doors. In today's world, where women perform vital roles outside their homes, not only hospitals and doctors but employers, educational systems, indeed entire societies will have to remove the obstacles to breastfeeding.

Over the longer term, our sights and those of WHO [the World Health Organization] are set on the 1995 goal of the [baby-friendly hospital] initiative — worldwide enforcement of the International Code that prohibits distribution of free and low-cost infant formula through health care facilities and the transformation, hospital-by-hospital, and then of whole communities, to a world that is truly 'baby-friendly'.

Baby-friendly status to Bhutan hospital

The Thimphu General Hospital in the capital of Bhutan was declared 'baby-friendly' in March this year, the first hospital in the country to earn the designation.

To mark the event, a commemorative plaque was unveiled at the entrance to the hopital, and a video — prepared by students at the health school, highlighting the adverse effects of bottle-feeding and the benefits of breastfeeding — was screened. The video will be used in health education activities around the country and will be shown regularly in the waiting room at Thimphu General Hospital.

Although only 10 per cent of the 25,000 births each year in Bhutan take place in hospitals, the Department of Health Services recognizes the powerful example that institutions can set in encouraging breastfeeding.

Although Thimphu General is the country's first baby-friendly hospital, others are expected to win the designation later this year, after staff members complete their training in the 'Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding'. Already bottle-feeding is not permitted in any hospital in Bhutan; if a bottle is brought into a hospital, it is confiscated. Advertisements for breastmilk substitutes and for feeding bottles are also prohibited in Bhutan and their sale restricted. *—Taufique Mujtaba, UNICEF Thimphu.*

HEALTH NOTES

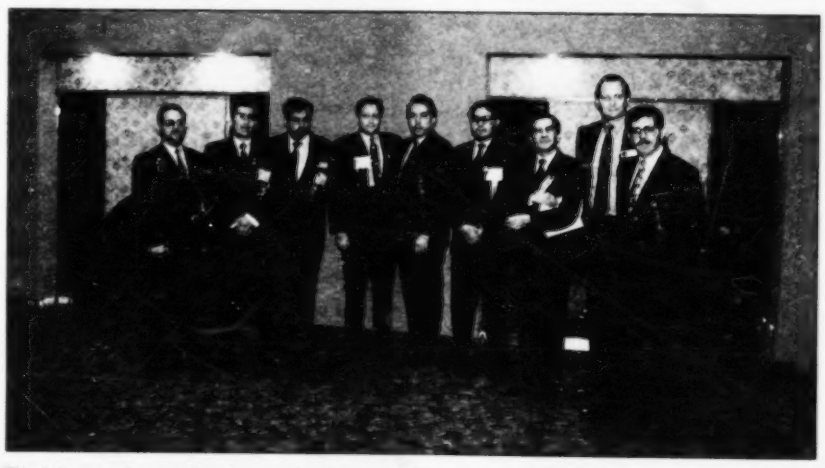
Joining forces against Chagas' disease

Six Latin American countries of the 'Southern Cone' — Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay — have united to eliminate Chagas' disease by the year 2000. The disease, which exists only on the South American continent, is caused in rural areas by a parasite transmitted to humans by the blood-sucking triatomine bug. In urban areas, it is spread primarily through transfusion with infected blood. Within the Cone, 11 million people, approximately one in 20, are thought to be infected; about a third of these will develop disabling or fatal chronic disorders of the heart or gastrointestinal tract in the course of the disease. Elsa Segura, the Health Minister for Catamarca, one of Argentina's hardest hit provinces, praises the countries' collaborative effort. "Never have we had all the countries of half a continent joining for a sustained campaign to wipe out transmission of the disease."

New study reveals sex education is needed in Africa

A recent study conducted among more than 13,000 young people in 11 African countries revealed that adolescents do not use contraception, nor do they discuss the possibility of contracting a sexually transmitted disease or AIDS, and they do not tell their families about their relationships. The study's findings indicate that young people of both sexes need to be better prepared to deal with relationships and sexual encounters before they occur. Families, teachers and health workers also need instruction on how to be viable resources for young people. Interviewers for the study used a new technique, 'narrative research approach', which is based on storytelling in their research. The traditional interview method — personal revelation — often results in censored and falsified personal accounts of behaviour.

A video featuring the new methodology is envisaged for distribution worldwide to promote national programmes for adolescents.



Fight against diarrhoeal disease has new partners
A new alliance between Junior Chamber International (JCI), UNICEF and the Pan American Health Organization was launched to combat diarrhoeal diseases in the Americas and the Caribbean. The groups met recently in Ecuador and signed a programme of action. At the meeting, from left, Rafael Díaz Ganaim, President of Junior Chamber Venezuela; Luis Fernando Restrepo, President of Junior Chamber Colombia; Roberto Samaniego, President of Junior Chamber Mexico; Robby Dawkins, JCI President; Jaime Torales Kennedy, JCI Executive Vice-President; Enrique Espinosa, President of Junior Chamber Bolivia; Carlos Carrillo, President of Junior Chamber Ecuador; Gunther Meyer, Executive Director (Member Development) JCI; and Juan Esteban Calle, Vice-President for Area C.

NUTRITION NOTES

Vitamin A boost: Supplementing children's diets with vitamin A will reduce childhood mortality by an average of 23 per cent in areas with serious vitamin A deficiency, concludes a recently completed study by Professors George Beaton of the University of Toronto and Reynaldo Martorell of Cornell University.

The findings also suggest that reducing the number of deaths is not dependent on pharmaceutical doses of vitamin A. Any approach that improves vitamin A status — foods rich in the vitamin, fortified foods or vitamin A capsules — would be effective.

Targeting newlyweds: Newly married women will be the next target of the community-based programme for a new nutrition project in Bangladesh. The rationale is that it will be easier to educate these women about a child's nutritional needs rather than women with several children. Focusing on a mother with her first child is likely to benefit a greater number of children since what she learns will affect the way she raises all her children.

Buying nutrition care: In Bolivia, when a woman pays for an obstetrical delivery, she also gets a package of prenatal and postnatal care, including a growth monitoring programme, nutrition counselling and iron supplementation — all part of a programme instituted by Pro Salud, a private non-profit group committed to better nutrition and preventive care, and under contract with the national health system.

A weighty grain of salt: Salt fortified doubly with iron and iodine is on the market for the first time in the state of Tamil Nadu (India). Salt fortified only with iron is also on sale and is being used in the large Mid-Day Meals programme. A recent study in Tamil Nadu showed that, over a 100-day period, iron-fortified salt had the same effect as iron tablets in improving nutritional status.

Rice packs an extra punch: A newly developed vitamin A and iron pre-mix powder is being combined with ground rice to produce 'super' kernels which are then reformulated to approximate whole rice grains and mixed with regular rice.

Tests in Brazil show a 100 per cent retention of the micronutrients after washing the rice and 85 per cent retention after cooking. The product, Ultra Rice, developed by a firm in Oregon (US), is now being replicated in the Philippines.

Nutrition in Latin America: Two thirds of all malnourished children in Latin America live in Brazil and Mexico, according to a new World Bank study, *Poverty and Income Distribution in Latin America: The story of the 1980s* (by George Psacharopoulos and others).

The study also shows that child malnutrition in rural areas is at least 40 per cent higher than in urban areas. In Paraguay the rural rate is double, and in Peru, triple. In Bolivia, malnutrition among Indian language-speaking children is twice that of Spanish-speaking children; in Guatemala, malnutrition is at least 40 per cent higher for the indigenous population. Overall an estimated 10 million preschool-age children in the region are moderately or severely malnourished.

Child rights spark hope and possible controversies

Delivering the sixth Annual UNICEF Lecture in London, sponsored by the UK Committee for UNICEF, on 14 June 1993, JAMES HIMES, Director of the UNICEF International Centre for Child Development in Florence (Italy), spoke of the opportunities and challenges, the controversies and sensitivities, that lie ahead in the work of bringing the Convention on the Rights of the Child to life. Excerpts from his speech follow.

UNICEF needs rather urgently to strengthen its own capacity, as well as the capacities of many of our allies to play a much more active and more consistently professional role in what UNICEF Executive Director, James P. Grant, described as a great challenge facing us:

> "...to ensure that the spirit of the Convention and its provisions progressively work their way into policy and the legal codes and institutional life of nations and the everyday life of individuals, families and communities."

Although the Convention does not necessarily mean that UNICEF will or should become more involved in controversial issues, I will argue that we will. My view, moreover, is that this trend is desirable as well as likely to happen. It is desirable most importantly for straightforward moral reasons.

The 20th century must not be allowed to close with the world's leading agency for children turning its back on the kinds of human degradation that are so painfully evident in the horrors of child prostitutes; children working in mines, garbage dumps or in bonded labour; girl children raped by soldiers on the command of their officers; street children murdered by off-duty security personnel; children tortured while their parents are forced to watch and vice versa — to mention only a few of the more unbelievable acts of cruelty human beings have inflicted on children in recent decades.

In fact, just as we are seeing that it is virtually impossible for an organization such as UNICEF to stand aside in the face of the atrocities being perpetrated in former Yugoslavia, it may become a challenge to keep calling adequate attention to the less visible child victims of violations of the Convention: From the young girl child with no access to education, to those millions of children who die or remain permanently disabled from the gradual but relentless effects of hunger, malnutrition and disease, those who, in the words of Coleridge, "will merely die so slowly that none call it murder."

Implementation strategies to reach the causes of violations of the rights of children, as well as to deal with consequences, must often include efforts extending far beyond the actions or inaction of individual governments. In terms, for example, of the child's rights to survival (in article 6 of the Convention) and to health (in article 24), some of the major problems lie in the powerful private sector, as well as at the family and household levels, rather than in the public sector as such.

The actions of the infant formula companies, as well as the practices of paediatricians, have been partly responsible for the disappointing results that many governments and others have had in promoting breastfeeding. The medical profession and the pharmaceutical companies have hardly been in the forefront of promoting greater availability and use of the very inexpensive oral rehydration salts. The tobacco industry, as well as some sectors of the television industry, are not child-friendly forces in the world today.

On the more positive side, in some countries, the media, professional associations, religious groups and other non-governmental organizations have been able to do much more than governments in overcoming the opposition of elements of the public and private sectors with interests counter to the survival and healthy development of children. UNICEF needs to learn how to work more effectively with these new kinds of allies.

All the conventional tools for institutional development, plus a number of other good management practices, need to be brought to bear — in the values vacuum of today's world — much more systematically, not just in the quest for private profit, where they have been taken at times to absurd extremes in the great rush to increase economic productivity and competitiveness, but rather for what is surely an equally worthy cause: the advancement of human rights worldwide.

Family Law and Children's Rights Congress meets in Australia

By John Shaw

Seven hundred delegates from 54 countries met in Sydney (Australia) in July for the First World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights, possibly the largest international meeting of legal experts ever held on children's rights.

Organized by American, Asian and Australian legal groups, its goal was to exchange information on an international level as well as to encourage countries to take action to protect children and their rights. The conference would "further cooperation to protect children and strengthen the role of the family," said Mr. Chuan Leekpai, the Prime Minister of Thailand, in a message supporting the event.

The Congress was held at a time of enormous problems and potential for children. "The position of children is deteriorating in virtually all countries," wrote David Skoler in an issue of the *Family Advocate*, a journal of the American Bar Association (ABA) which featured the Sydney conference. Skoler heads the ABA group that is advising the Clinton administration on ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the

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UNICEF Snoeks

A group of Kgalagadi children at festivities in Tsabong.

Botswana celebrates Day of the African Child

By Ann Snoeks

"We are very happy that as children we have been given a rare opportunity to air our views and to prove our potential. We must also let you know our complaints," said William Morewa, a young man from Macha Senior Secondary School in the Kgalagadi district of Botswana.

In a brave and serious voice, William read the Children's Memorandum to Hon. Patrick K. Balopi, Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, at the close of the national celebrations for the Day of the African Child (DAC) on June 16, held in the town of Tsabong this year.

Parents' poverty was a major problem, William said, resulting in the lack of food, proper clothing, school uniforms and sufficient light to study. Children also were expected to assist in labour and hunting during school time.

He exposed other social ills in his appeal to the Minister, who is also responsible for child welfare in Botswana. Poverty and high unemployment in the district, where people work mainly in cattle and goat rearing, led to boredom — and the road to the local bars. "We want to be protected from our parents who drink heavily and spend all the family income on beer and beat us when drunk and neglect us," said William.

Needs to fill

Economists argue that providing electricity, telephones, hospitals, paved roads, vocational training centres and schools is uneconomical because of the district's sparse population — only about 33,000 people live in an area of 110,000 square kilometres.

Yet the children of the district think differently. They want a democratized school system and access to information about infectious diseases such as AIDS, they told the audience.

Plans for the future

The Hon. L.T.J. Mothibamele, the member of parliament (MP) for Kgalagadi, said in an interview that with Government assistance, small industries could boom in this land of fragile desert beauty, where white and russet sand dunes meet but do not mingle, and where the sandy shades of bushveld, grass and tree savannah and salt pans change from the softest yellow to orange, brown and grey.

Among the steps the Government could take, according to the MP, would be *providing water to develop the tourist sector* and helping farmers finance feedlots for their cattle, so that milk could be produced even during drought. Cheese and butter could also be manufactured locally.

The children of employees on the large commercial farms along the Molopa river near the border with South Africa would have a much improved life if their parents were better paid, explained the MP. Herders are estimated to earn the equivalent of US$15 per month, supplemented with rations of tobacco and mealie meal.

The MP also believed that if schools and hostels were opened near the commercial farms, the labourers would be more likely to let their children go to school. The children of labourers would also benefit more from Botswana's free-food, immunization and oral rehydration programmes, the MP said, if farm employers cooperated and there were more social workers.

The MP, the Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, the Deputy Permanent Secretaries from the Ministries of Education and Health, the UNICEF Representative, the local Chief and the District Commissioner all addressed the crowd.

As the children from Kgalagadi left the show ground, they said it had been a fantastic four-day celebration for them and hoped that next year all the schools from Botswana would gather in Kgalagadi. "But will we still celebrate DAC in Tsabong?" one girl asked anxiously.

Driving back to the country's capital, Gaborone, we stopped to give the last DAC T-shirt to a child on horseback in the desert, the children's calls still echoing in our ears.

Ann Snoeks is Communications and Information Officer, UNICEF Gaborone.

CHILD RIGHTS

Strong and steady pressure needed

The First World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights was held in Sydney (Australia) from 4 to 9 July, soon after the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. At the Congress, which attracted 700 legal and social specialists from 54 countries, prominent children's rights advocates Dr. Vitit Muntarbhorn and Brian Burdekin spoke to* First Call for Children *reporter John Shaw.

Stronger government and community action is needed to make the Convention on the Rights of the Child more effective, according to Dr. Vitit Muntarbhorn and Brian Burdekin, two leading lawyers working to advocate for, and monitor implementation of, the Convention.

"The Convention is widely accepted and many call it a Magna Carta for children," said Dr. Muntarbhorn. "But only the fullest participation of all can make the Convention work for all." What was still needed, he added, were realistic and related policies and measures from States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses and parents.

The 10-member Committee on the Rights of the Child, to which States Parties to the Convention are required to report, is one part of the implementation process. Although the Committee has no binding powers, it can influence countries, Dr. Muntarbhorn said, particularly during its review of the reports submitted by ratifying countries. For instance, when the Committee reviewed Viet Nam's report, it felt the country's juvenile justice practices could be improved. The Hanoi Government responded by asking ASIANET, a Thailand-based child rights NGO, for advice.

Obstacles to children's rights

Dr. Muntarbhorn noted that several countries had reservations about certain provisions of the Convention. Others were "uneasy about the political rights of children," he said.

Yet, even when and where national laws conformed to the Convention, weak enforcement often diluted their impact, he said. "Moreover, many existing laws are remedial rather than preventive and do not tackle the root causes of child abuse and exploitation," he added.

Caring for the rights of "our children" but not "their children" was yet another problem, said Dr. Muntarbhorn, referring to discrimination against children who lacked citizenship in their country of residence, or were either refugees or stateless, and perhaps the children of minorities and indigenous people.

Mr. Burdekin agreed, emphasizing what he calls the "chasm between principle and practice, between rhetoric and commitment" concerning the Convention. "Doing what it requires will involve not just academic and legal work, but sustained effort by governments and NGOs. The Convention is not a matter of social theory but of rights."

Yet all must recognize, he continued, that speedy ratification could not equal full compliance. "The reality is that human rights agreements provide for progressive implementation, rather than immediate compliance in every detail. The Convention is an ongoing programme, not a 'set and forget' instrument. Getting the laws right is one challenge. Seeing rights assured in practice is the next."

Mr. Burdekin warned rights advocates, particularly in the West, against focusing on civil and political rights at the expense of economic, social and cultural rights. "I believe one of the problems in the debate with the developing countries is that we concentrate too much on civil and political issues," he said. "We must recognize that the more serious violations of human rights are in economic and social areas."

NOTE: Dr. Vitit Muntarbhorn teaches law at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, writes for newspapers in Bangkok and is a rural aid worker. He has been a Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children for the UN Commission on Human Rights.

Brian Burdekin, formerly a diplomat and government legal advisor, has been Australia's Commissioner for Human Rights since 1988. He helped draft the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and at the recent Vienna Conference successfully proposed that the Convention be strengthened to require more official "protection of children from prostitution." Mr. Burdekin is now drafting a protocol seeking that protection.

Australia conference

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Child. (The US is the only major Western nation that has neither signed nor ratified the Convention, but is expected to do so in the near future.)

The Congress's more than 100 papers and workshops covered a number of the most pressing concerns and issues, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, abduction, child labour, abortion, family courts, child custody and access, genetic engineering, welfare systems, refugees and domestic violence. Many of the papers were highly technical, spelling out the legal details of getting rights off paper and into life. Speakers included government ministers and senior officials from Australia, China, Sweden and Uganda.

The Congress received extensive media coverage and was seen as a valuable platform from which law and social advocates could lobby official and public opinion. The unseen clients were "friendless and inarticulate children who need help and support," said Stuart Fowler of Australia, co-chairman of the Congress.

Among its achievements, the Congress:

- Founded and funded a committee to monitor and act against the sex trade in children in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Called upon governments to strengthen the Convention on the Rights of the Child to combat child prostitution and pornography. (A protocol on this is being drafted by Australia's Human Rights Commission. For measures being taken in some other countries, see box.)
- Recommended that donor nations and agencies revise their aid programmes to help developing countries comply with the Convention, particularly in the fields of health, education and child labour.

The Congress is expected to meet again in four years.

NEWS BRIEFS

Survey shows extent of child work in Nepal: Half of the labour force working in 2,000 carpet factories in Nepal are children under 17 years of age, according to a 1992 survey on child labour conducted by the Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre. Of the more than 3,300 children surveyed, nearly 65 per cent were between the ages of 11 and 14, and almost 8 per cent were under 10 years of age. More than 50 per cent were illiterate. The children's average monthly salary was Rs. 396 (US$8).

The study revealed that children were exposed to poor lighting and ventilation and suffered from a variety of ailments, including eye, respiratory, skin and most frequently gastro-intestinal problems. Girl children were also victims of sexual harassment.

A war against women: The new *Fact Sheet on Gender Violence*, published by the International Women's Tribune Center (IWTC) and the Resource Centre of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), contains startling statistics on the incidence of wife abuse, sexual abuse and rape, and data on other forms of gender violence. The statistics reveal that violence or the threat of violence pervades many women's lives. Among the findings:

* In Santiago (Chile), a survey indicates that 80 per cent of women have suffered physical, emotional or sexual abuse by a male partner or relative.
* In Bangladesh, murder of women by their husbands accounts for 50 per cent of all murders.
* In South Africa, a woman is raped every minute and a half, with a total of approximately 386,000 women raped each year.
* An island-wide random survey of women in Barbados revealed that nearly one in three have been sexually abused during childhood or adolescence.

For more information, contact: IWTC, 777 United Nations Plaza, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10017, USA. Telephone: 212-687-8633; fax: 212-661-2704.

EVENTS AND MEETINGS

October

16, World Food Day, global (Contact: FAO); **17**, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, global (Contact: UN); **27-29**, Partners for Independence: Models that Work (Contact: US Council for International Rehabilitation, fax: (202) 232-0016).

November

17-19, Vatican Conference: 'The Child and the Future of the World', Rome (Contact: the Vatican); **20**, Anniversary of adoption of the Convention on Rights of the Child, global (Contact: Division of Public Affairs, UNICEF New York, tel: (212)326-7303; fax: (212)326-7260, 326-7315); **28-2 December**, Launch of the International Year of the Family 1994: 'Promoting Families for the Well-Being of Individuals and Societies', Valletta, (Malta) (Contact: IYF-NGO Secretariat, An der Huelben, fax: 431 512 163875).

December

1, World AIDS Day: 'Time to Act', global (Contact: WHO); **3**, International Day of Disabled Persons, global (Contact: UN); **5**, International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development, global (Contact: UN); **9**, State of the World's Children Report release, global (Contact: Division of Information, UNICEF New York, tel: (212)326-7263; fax: (212)326-7768); **10**, Human Rights Day, global (Contact: UN); **12**, International Children's Day of Broadcasting, global (Contact: Division of Information, UNICEF New York, tel: (212)326-7288; fax: (212)326-7768); **12-17**, VIIIth Conference on AIDS in Africa, Marrakech (Morocco), (Contact: Lesley Miller, Health Promotion Unit, UNICEF New York, tel: (212)326-7609; fax: (212)326-7059).

1994

International Year of the Family, global (Contact: IYF Coordinator, tel: (43-1)211-31; fax (43-1)23 2156).

Please let ***First Call for Children*** know about your events and meetings by sending notices four months prior to the event to: Yvonne Lester, ***First Call for Children***, 3 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA or fax: (212) 326-7768.

Call for papers

The fifth International Special Education Congress is to be held in Birmingham (England) in 1995. The Congress, organized by two UK charities, the National Association for Special Education Needs and the Association of Workers for Children, invites delegates from around the world to share ideas and experiences of working with children and young people who have special educational needs. If you are interested in presenting a paper, please contact: John Visser, ISEC Congress Organiser, School of Education, University of Birmingham, B15 2TT, United Kingdom. Fax: 4471-21.414.4865.

International response to child sex trade

'Long reach' laws are being prepared and used by several Western governments to prosecute their citizens involved with prostitution or pornography with minors in other countries.

Extending national laws off shore, known as extra-territoriality, is unusual, but some governments think it is needed to catch or deter 'sex tourists' in Asia.

Detectives from Stockholm are patrolling bar and brothel areas in Bangkok for Swedes preying on young girls and boys. Australian diplomats in Bangkok and in Manila have 'watch lists' of visiting Australians suspected of paedophilia.

While the laws are unlikely to catch many offenders and act more as a deterrent, they indicate a growing public and political concern about the issue in some Western countries. And offenders can be caught: A 60-year-old Swedish businessman was recently arrested in Bangkok with a 14-year-old Thai boy.

Because testimony in such cases can be difficult to obtain, Australian officials, who are now writing such laws, are considering videotaping the testimony of victims and sending it via satellite to Australian courts. Canada and Germany are also framing similar off-shore laws.

BONDED LABOUR

Sweeping it under the carpet

Six-year-old Shankar, a bonded labourer in India's very profitable carpet industry, was liberated by the Indian Bonded Labour Liberation Front (BLLF) last year. He says, "I had to handle very heavy instruments to cut the knots in each carpet. Many times my thumbs and fingers were injured when the cutter slipped. I would cry for my mother but the master would beat me.

"He never took me to the hospital or gave me medicine. What he used to do was take the match stick and fill my cut with the match powder. Then he would set fire to it with another match so that my skin and blood would burn together."

The bonded labour system in South Asia, where families, including small children, are forced to repay generations of debts incurred by their parents and grandparents, and are sometimes even bought and sold, is clearly one of the most virulent forms of modern slavery. Despite government legislation to abolish the practice, it is still widespread, tightly woven into the social and economic fabric of the region.

In India, bonded labour has been illegal since 1976. In 1992, after many years of hard struggle, the Government of Pakistan passed the Bonded Labour Act that abolished the system in that country, freeing and discharging bonded labourers from future obligation and debt. In 1992, Nepal passed a Children's Rights and Welfare Act that prohibits children under 14 from employment and closely regulates the labour conditions for children above that age.

While such legislation is a major step forward, implementation and legal enforcement are still very major obstacles. Much depends on local police, courts and provincial governments, often "corrupt and easily influenced by the wealthy businessmen most concerned for maintenance of their large profits," according to the *Child Workers in Asia* bulletin, January-March 1993. "Many workers and their families remain bonded to their masters, unaware and afraid to break the chains of their imprisonment."

According to BLLF, a South Asian NGO, 8 million children in Pakistan are still bonded, 500,000 from 4 to 14 years of age in the carpet industry, 50,000 working in small factories supervised by provincial governments.

Two reports, published by UNICEF and the Pakistan Government, state that many carpet children die every year from tuberculosis, cancer and hunger, and from poor nourishment and harsh conditions in the factories, while carpet manufacturers earn billions. A statement to the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June this year, signed by five South Asian human rights groups, declares: "The utter lack of political will to abolish this most despicable form of forced labour has come to stay as the worst violation of human rights in the countries of South Asia."

In addition, the link between education, poverty and exploitative child labour is well-understood by activists — that poverty is not only a cause of child labour, but a result. "As long as children work, they will remain uneducated," according to Kailash Satyarthi, Chairperson of SACCS (the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude). They are losing their eyes, their lungs and different parts of their bodies. And so they will remain a liability for their nation. They can never become an asset."

The two articles below show that the uphill battle for children's rights continues in the efforts to implement existing legislation. In focusing on education and health care, they also reveal the indivisibility of legal and human development rights.

For those who have a self-interest in perpetuating the status quo, education is dangerous. It not only provides the tools to lift children from poverty, but ultimately empowers them to understand their rights and join with others to take action in bringing about their own freedom.

Reading and righting

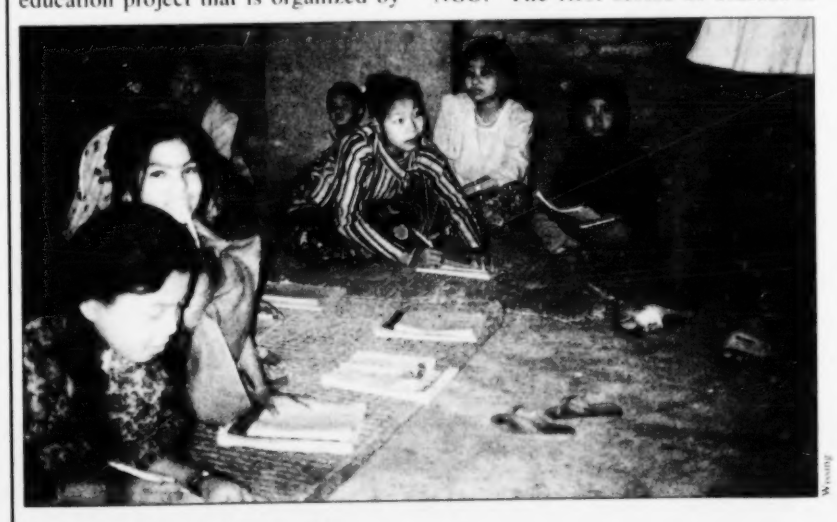
By Lotte A. Wissing

It is an early sunny spring morning in the Kalimati area in Kathmandu (Nepal). In a large room on the second floor of a three-storey brick building, 30 women and girls and a few boys sit on floor mats eagerly bent over books and paper. With serious faces and pencils in hand, they look up at the far end of the room, where two young men point to an old piece of blackboard hanging on a string from a nail in the wall. Laughter erupts as participants read aloud and sometimes make mistakes.

This large, well-swept, clean room is in sharp contrast to rooms in the rest of the building which have missing walls and are filled with hay and dust. While literacy is the main focus, learning about cleanliness is part of the new education project that is organized by Child Welfare Society, a Nepalese non-governmental organization (NGO) for female carpet workers and their children — many of whom work with their mothers in the factory. In addition to daily literacy classes, the workers are visited each Saturday by a medical doctor.

A brainchild of Kiran Tiwari, President of the Child Welfare Society, the one-hour daily literacy class began in mid-February with a total of 56 students. A month later enrolment had grown to 200, and classes have since spread to other carpet factories in Kathmandu.

The teacher, Mr. Labaraj Khatiwada, a Nepalese Scout who teaches at a regular school, conducts the class in his free time for a small monthly fee of Rs. 600 (US$12) paid by the NGO. The first series of classes is scheduled to be completed in six months and will then be evaluated.



Carpet workers in literacy class.

The carpet workers are mostly hill people who live in a building next to the factory in this poor neighbourhood. Despite the time that it adds to their working day, worker involvement is very high. Factory supervisors, motivated by the Child Welfare Society, encourage participation in class.

The manager of the factory feared that political activities might develop and, at first, denied access to the doctor, thinking that he might stir up trouble and encourage workers to protest their conditions. But the enthusiastic supervisors convinced the manager of the benefits of literacy training and health education, with the understanding that the project would not jeopardize the work.

Such an agreement can be difficult for NGOs like the Child Welfare Society, which must try to separate the inseparable — functional literacy from its inherently political implications. But Tiwari sees his role as that of motivator and believes "education, education and more education is the beginning from which all development follows." He maintains that basic literacy is the first step in making people aware of their own situation and empowering them to improve it.

In a small room at the back of the building, Dr. Dhruba Raj Adhikari from the Patan Hospital provides free health services to the carpet workers. Today, he examines and prescribes medicine to an eight-year-old girl suffering from

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Building freedom through education: Brick by brick

By Paul Taylor

The Bonded Labour Liberation Front (BLLF) of Pakistan was formed in 1988 to voice the plight of the bonded worker and has been instrumental in bringing about the 1992 legislation abolishing the system. Recently, the NGO has shifted its focus to promotion of education for the children of bonded and ex-bonded labourers through a new programme called 'Struggle against Slavery through Education'. The organization has set up 122 small schools in all four provinces of Pakistan with 5,000 freed bonded children between the ages of 6 and 12.

These very simple schools aim to provide basic numeracy, literacy and social awareness skills for the children. They are called Apna School (Our Own School), emphasizing the parent and community participation in organizing and running them.

Role of parents

Parents are motivated to take responsibility for their children's education and, after generations of exploitation and abuse, are at last taking steps to control their own lives.

The schools begin with the formation of a parents' committee. Teachers, recruited from the labour force, are trained to improve their skills and are supported by local field-workers, called ombudsmen and motivators. This team works together to develop educational opportunities that best fit the needs of children. The schools are based mainly on the sites of brick kilns or in the communities where workers live, providing easy access for children.

Education for their children is an entirely new concept for the labourers, and much work is needed to motivate parents and raise their awareness of the benefits. Parents who consent to send their children to school may have to accept a drop in earnings, since the children would traditionally be working in the brick fields. Parents of large families may allow only some of their children to attend, while others must work.

Negotiations must also take place with the brick kiln owners who may see the schools as a threat to their production line and profits. As children become literate and numerate, they can help their parents recognize when they are being cheated by kiln owners.

One Apna school operates on the outskirts of Lahore, where there are numerous brick kilns. In a simple enclosed yard, a small blackboard stands at the front of the class where 40 children, sitting on floor matting, are keenly involved in varied activities — reading, writing and drawing. A small group of younger children are carefully counting out moulded clay balls into neat little piles. Ms. Rassol, education consultant at BLLF, explains: "Our ultimate goal is to make these

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Group seeks programmes for working children

The Sub-Working Group on Exploited Children of the NGO Committee on UNICEF is looking for unique and holistic programmes that will help working children develop more fully.

Although it is recognized that many of the world's children today work for their own, their families' and/or their community's survival, many still labour under unsafe conditions and are threatened by health hazards and sexual exploitation. To improve their situation, there must be careful monitoring and reporting of conditions inimical to children and of the enforcement of principles stated in international documents like the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Working Group also wants to draw attention to and celebrate the NGO programmes that are successfully assisting working children. To this end, information is being sought about any existing programmes using the following criteria:

- promoting the health and the physical, mental, moral, spiritual and social development of the child;
- preventing working children from becoming street children;
- adding educational components to programmes offering work experience;
- educating children for life by addressing their everyday problems;
- encouraging the participation of children in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes;
- adapting school to the children's realities as workers;
- fostering links between children, their families and communities.

Please send descriptions of programmes (including a mailing address and contact person) to: Thomas Kennedy, Chairman, Exploited Children Working Group, c/o UNICEF House H-6F, New York, NY 10017, USA.

NGO ACTION POINTS

Scouts promote adolescent reproductive health in Egypt

Boy Scouts and Boy Guides in Egypt are key participants in a project to educate young people about issues related to adolescent reproductive health. 'Youth for Youth', currently under way in five other countries — Colombia, Jamaica, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka — is coordinated by the International Planned Parenthood Federation and designed to promote adolescent reproductive health through collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Activities cover sexual and reproductive health, the consequences of early marriage and pregnancy, and safe motherhood. More than 1,500 adolescents in Egypt have attended workshops to train and prepare as peer educators.

YMCA in Nicaragua helps the environment

As urban populations increase, forests disappear and water resources are polluted with sewage, industrial waste and toxic fertilizers. The YMCA of Nicaragua, only three and a half years old, is working to find solutions to these environmental problems.

A preliminary study by the YMCA showed that people are aware of the environmental crisis, but there is no coordinated action. To respond to this situation, the NGO is focusing on environmental education and has established relationships with concerned organizations and youth groups to not only identify what needs to be done but also to prepare a regional programme on environment and development. Working in two rural communities, the NGO has begun agricultural and reforestation activities. In one region, which suffered serious environmental damage, the NGO is engaged in a comprehensive health and education programme.

IIRR promotes self-help in the Philippines

In the Philippine province of Cavite, the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) carried out an integrated programme to overcome the interrelated problems of poverty, ignorance, disease and civic inertia. The programme, which includes income generation, seed capital for a peoples' bank, and primary health care, has had a significant impact on the lives of many villagers.

In the village of Pulong Talahibatn, Lucia Maligalig, a housewife and mother of two, played a key role in the NGO-initiated primary health care project. She helped mobilize the people and prepared them for monthly visits by both the IIRR's health specialist and a midwife from the Department of Health. She organized the collection of donations to pay for the establishment of a *botika sa barangay*, or village drugstore — a health care concept developed by IIRR. Owned and managed by villagers, it is a much needed outlet in remote villages providing medicines for common ailments such as colds, headaches and coughs.

IIRR provides training in the use of patent medicines and herbal alternatives, in nutrition, hygiene, monitoring children's growth, and in monitoring blood pressure. Mrs. Maligalig managed the drugstore and gave advice to the members of her village. While under her leadership, four other women were trained as Barangay health workers. These paraprofessionals provide ongoing education about health and hygiene, and help treat minor ailments, referring villagers to a doctor in town when necessary.

Dr. Adhikari gives free medical care to the workers. Here he examines baby Asmita, whose mother works at the factory.

Reading and righting

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bronchitis. Her father sits on a bed in the corner, wrapped in blankets, a victim of typhoid.

Bronchitis and other respiratory infections are common diseases in the carpet factories where the halls are too cold or too hot with very poor or no ventilation and the workers inhale dust and wool particles all day. The doctor explains that many of the children working in the carpet industry also suffer from worms, gastro-enteritis and anaemia.

He gestures to a girl and her brother, both of whom have flesh-coloured scratches and dry, dark brown sores on their legs and arms. Scabies is abundant in this environment, where entire families are fighting poverty during long working hours with no extra time to wash and keep clean, and where money is so scarce that it can barely buy food, much less medication.

The winter has been cold and the fingers of many children are swollen around the joints, with frostbite and eczema from handling the rigid wool. As the doctor examines them, their faces tell clearly how painful it is.

A 21-year-old mother brings in her first-born, 2-month-old baby girl called Asmita. Asmita lies next to her mother in the factory hall every day so that she can be breastfed and cared for. But it is obvious from her runny eyes that the baby is already affected by the dust and should be looked after in a separate and cleaner room while her mother is working.

The 1992 Children's Act prohibits the employment of children under 14 and further prohibits their employment in any work that is "hazardous" or "harmful" to their health or life. Yet it is clear that both provisions of this Act are being broken or circumvented as employers, and sometimes officials, continue to sweep the abuses 'under the rug'. Clearly, large numbers of children in carpet factories work under hazardous conditions and are under the legal age. (Their labour is unrecorded and they are unpaid as the owners claim they are "helping their mother and the family.")

And who protects the infant, like Asmita, who is not working, yet is exposed from birth to an environment that is harmful to her health? Some NGOs, like the Kathmandu-based Creative Development Centre, have expressed an urgent need for day-care centres and other ways to alleviate unhealthy conditions for the children of working mothers.

As the children's rights movement grows in Nepal, there is still a great need for better cooperation among NGOs and for consolidated pressure on the Government to implement the Children's Act. In cooperation there is strength. There is also the hope that, aided by NGOs such as the Child Welfare Society, learning to read and write may also lead the women and children working in carpet factories to understanding their rights.

Lotte Wissing is a UNICEF staff member who worked in Nepal.

Brick by brick

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schools independent, which is why we place so much emphasis on the parents' committee. Our slogan is 'freedom through education' and parents can see that an education for their child will provide more opportunities. At the very least, because of growing awareness and knowledge, they will be able to avoid the kind of exploitation and abuse suffered by their parents."

A member of the parents' committee says, "For our children this is new hope. Before, my child was blind but now she can see," says this mother, pointing to her daughter who is seated in the middle of the class and smiling. "Before, she knew only how to make bricks, but now she is interested in reading and writing. She says she wants to be a doctor and know all about the world."

Ms. Rassol recognized that a gap was quickly developing between the parent and child because of the child's growing awareness. "We have plans to set up adult training classes so that parents who want to learn can also study."

Unfortunately, the education the children receive is not recognized by the Government and they are therefore not able to transfer to higher education. This is not due to any lack of ability on the part of the child but to the strict government regulations controlling enrolment.

BLLF's future plans include educating women about their rights, primary health care, family planning and vocational training. They are also planning, with the help of UNICEF and NGOs in Sweden, to upgrade schools to the primary level.

Building confidence and social skills form a major part of the school curriculum. During the day, the children stand confidently as they sing songs and recite poems. As the school day finishes, they sing their school song and proudly chant with their tiny fists held high: "We are free. WE ARE FREE."

Paul Taylor works for the Social Services Department of the Church of Christ in Thailand and is a volunteer with Child Workers of Asia.

Rights in childhood are everybody's rights

By Miriam Lyons

Childhood is the foundation of every life and the common thread that links all human rights. Unfortunately, this fundamental concept was ignored at the NGO Forum preceding the World Conference on Human Rights, thereby undermining its stated theme of 'All human rights for all' and the Forum's success.

Although the initial agenda called for all working groups to address children's rights, only three specifically addressed this issue in the final NGO report to the Conference. It is apparent that NGOs concerned with children's rights need to develop a new approach linking children's rights with all human rights issues.

Whose rights are children's rights?

NGOs need to pay careful attention to whom the word 'children' applies. Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as "every human being below the age of 18." This refers clearly to a period of time, not to a subgroup such as those belonging to a specific gender, religion, ethnic background, economic status, etc. And children should not be thought of as a distinctly vulnerable group that burdens society. Childhood is a critical time span in the life of *every* human being. Children are the foundation of society. They offer the opportunity to change the world and they are a continuous source of hope.

Children's rights affect their lives as adults

The future success of improving the human rights of all groups depends on protecting and respecting the rights of children. Abuses against children affect them over their entire life-span. Access to food, shelter, education, health care and protection, and freedom from discrimination during their first 18 years, play a key role in limiting or empowering their ability as adults to secure their rights.

Abuses against girls set a pattern of continued abuse against them as women. A girl denied nourishment or education because of her gender is destined to be a disempowered woman. A girl who is circumcised sustains a permanent injury. A girl sold or forced into marriage at puberty or earlier has already lost her right to freedom as a woman. A girl who is raised to view herself as inferior to her brothers, and a boy who is raised to view himself as privileged because of gender, will continue this cycle as adults.

Children forced to work to survive at the expense of their health and education become the next generation of impoverished, illiterate and exploited adults. Children physically or emotionally injured by war, violence and sexual exploitation often confront insurmountable obstacles in becoming, as adults, fully contributing members of society.

A new way of thinking

The Convention on the Rights of the Child should be promoted as the legal instrument that introduces a new way of thinking about and by children. It not only defines the rights that provide for the survival, development and protection of children, it empowers them with the right to speak and be heard in matters that affect their lives. Article 29 defines a child's right to be prepared "for a responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin." Only through such changes in thinking can human rights abuses be permanently eradicated.

A respected and empowered child has the possibility of becoming a respected and empowered adult. Conversely, children taught to perceive themselves as having superior rights are actually denied their right to learn to live in harmony with others.

The shocking realization of many NGOs, that rights in childhood were regarded as insignificant by the human rights community attending the NGO Forum, underscores the need for rapid and universal education about the critical role these rights play. It is not enough to demand that human rights abuses stop. Policing abuses will neither prevent them nor restore the rights that have already been violated. Nor will it change the thinking of a society that condones or ignores the abuses. It is time to work cooperatively to eliminate all human rights violations by attacking them at their source — in childhood.

Miriam Lyons is coordinator of the children's rights project for the NGO, Association Francois-Xavier Bagnoud, and participated in the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in June 1993.

PUBLICATIONS

ILO Child Labour Collection

Three new books published by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) address the issues of child labour.

Child Labour, A Guide to Project Design, by Alec Fyfe, is a manual to help policy makers and practitioners adapt the techniques of project design to the problems of child labour. It includes guidelines in international labour standards, situation analyses and interviewing techniques.

Children and Hazardous Work in the Philippines, by Victoria Rialp, documents the historical change in the Philippines from legislation to direct action and advocacy at the local level, paying particular attention to efforts to eliminate child prostitution.

Child Labour in Sri Lanka: Learning from the Past, by S.W.E. Goonesekere, highlights government measures to eliminate child employment. Analysing past experience and existing legislation, the author advocates the absolute prohibition of child employment and argues that collaboration by government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies is essential to reach that goal.

Available from ILO Publications Center, 49 Sheridan Ave., Suite SP, Albany, NY 12210, USA. (Cost: US$12.)

Reaching Health for All

Twenty-two case studies by experts and practitioners illustrate the tensions and difficult choices that are made when deciding on how to efficiently and equitably allocate limited health resources. The studies are philosophical and practical and include experiences from individual communities, nations and global health initiatives. These immensely readable and informative essays provide a thorough look at the BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) oral rehydration therapy programme in Bangladesh, training of health workers in the Philippines, and changing the image of the community health worker in Zaire. Edited by John Rohde, Merera Chatterjee and David Morley, and illustrated by Stephen Marazzi, *Reaching Health for All* is available for Rs. 150 from Neil O'Brien, Oxford University Press, YMCA Library Building, Jai Singh Road, New Delhi, 110001, India.

Women and HIV/AIDS

AIDS was killing women before it had a name, and by the late 1980s it had become one of the leading causes of death among women of reproductive age in many parts of the world.

Women and HIV/AIDS (An International Resource Book), edited and written by Marge Berer with Sunanda Ray brings together a decade of knowledge and experience regarding the impact of HIV and AIDS on women's health, sexual relationships and reproductive rights and what women are doing in response worldwide. Drawn from a wide range of sources, the book includes more than 50 contributions from activists, researchers, health professionals and women living with HIV/AIDS, and covers such issues as the effects on women's health, risk factors and risk reduction, safer sex, personal histories, and projects and services by and for women. Available in English, French and Spanish from TALC, P.O. Box 49, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 4AX, UK. Tel: 44 727 53869. Cost: £5.50 plus postage £2 (special terms for developing countries.) For orders from Europe, North America and Australia/New Zealand, contact: Women & HIV/AIDS Book, 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9SG, UK. Tel: 44 71 357 0136; fax: 44 71 357 0137. Cost: £14.99 including postage.

Upcoming NGO meetings on family and child rights

Promoting families — Malta

The World NGO Forum, marking the launch of the International Year of the Family (IYF) 1994, will take place in Valletta (Malta) from 28 November to 2 December 1993. The theme is '*Promoting Families for the Well*-Being of Individuals and Societies'.

The Forum will address the harsh realities facing families today while celebrating their resilience and innovative, diverse ways of coping, even surmounting, the pressures of an increasingly difficult world. Acknowledgement and support of individual family responsibility are essential for building a family-friendly society, where sufficient human and material resources and assistance are committed so families thrive rather than just survive.

In its five plenary sessions and more than 40 working groups, the Forum will focus on the strengths and functions, rights and responsibilities of families and pay special attention to the broadest range of regional and local concerns. This extends from land for poor families in Mexico, to families coping with the period of transition in Central and Eastern Europe, to the values of the extended family in Africa. It includes refugee families, families with disabled children, substitute and alternative families, children's rights, street children and emerging roles of fathers.

Organized by the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family in collaboration with other NGO Committees on the Family in New York and Paris, and in cooperation with the UN-IYF Secretariat and the Government of Malta, the Forum will bring together 'IYF multipliers' from all levels and all regions of the world. They include family members, professionals who work with families, NGOs, journalists, and policy makers from governments and the UN system, including UNICEF, to generate family-related ideas and actions. The Forum hopes to adopt an NGO Statement on the IYF and present it to the IYF launching session of the General Assembly in New York in early December.

For more information, please contact: IYF-NGO Executive Secretariat, An der Hulben 1/15, A-1010 Vienna, Austria. Telephone: (43-1)513 86 87; *fax: (43-1) 533 55 88.*

Advancing the rights of children — Guatemala

From 8 to 12 November 1993, the NGO Committee on UNICEF Conference, 'Advancing the Rights of Children: Call to Action for NGOs' will be held in Antigua (Guatemala). A major goal of the Conference is to build and strengthen relationships between local, regional and international communities. Using the rights of the child as a framework, a second major goal is to develop the direct link between children's right to legal protection and their right to human development — which includes nutrition, health and education. The Conference is co-sponsored by UNICEF and the NGO Committee on UNICEF, and 180 participants have been invited from eight countries in the region and from international organizations.

Articles on both conferences will appear in the April-June 1994 issue of ***First Call for Children***.

NGO Action for Children

Editor: Sara Ann Friedman
Geneva correspondent: Joanna Koch
Working Group: Gordon Klopf (OMEP), chair; Yvonne Asamoah (IASSW); Charlotte Brody (ACEI); Rita Cooper (OMEP); Amelia Dozzi (SO); Nancy Dubrow (WFMH); Rosalind Harris (ISS); Kate Katzki (ICSW); Joanna Koch (LLLI); Paul McCleary (CCF); Roberta Ross (ICJW); Bruce Yeager (PLAN).
NGO Action for Children is produced by the NGO Committee on UNICEF. The opinions expressed in the articles do not necessarily reflect those of UNICEF.

RESOURCES

UNICEF publications

Available from UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, H-9F, New York, NY 10017, USA.

Available in English unless otherwise noted.

A Time for Action. Girls, Women and Human Rights, produced by UNICEF Development Programmes for Women Unit, New York, 1993. 12 pages. ISBN 92-806-2799-6. US$2.95.

Girls and Women: A UNICEF Development Priority, by Maggie Black, describes the problems they face and UNICEF's policies on their education, health, nutrition and income-generation. 1993. 32 pages. ISBN 92-806-3028-8. Also available in French and Spanish. US$3.95.

Catalogues:

UNICEF Publications, Volume 1, 1987-1989. ISBN 92-806-3020-2.

UNICEF Publications, Volume 2, 1990-1992. ISBN 92-806-3022-9.
Annotated lists of UNICEF publications produced by New York, regional and country offices. 1993. In English only. Each US$19.95.

The following publications are available from your nearest UNICEF office or National Committee, or from UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza H-9F, New York, NY 10017, USA:

The Progress of Nations. The nations of the world ranked according to their achievements in child survival, health, nutrition, education, family planning and progress for women. September 1993. 54 p. Available also in Arabic, French, Hindi, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish.

UNICEF Facts and Figures 1993. Foldout leaflet lists the mid-decade goals for the well-being of children and families and provides references on their current health, nutrition and education situations. September 1993. Also available in French and Spanish.

Nutritional Security: An Ethical Imperative of the 1990s. Address by James P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, at the International Conference on Nutrition, Rome, 7 December 1992. Brochure.

Education for Development — It's in Your Hand, a poster/brochure for use with schools, teachers, youth groups, etc. that identifies 5 concepts which provide a 'lens' through which the world can be viewed: Interdependence, Images and Perceptions, Social Justice, Conflict and Resolution, and Change and the Future. French and Spanish versions will follow.

The following publications are available from the International Child Development Centre, Spedale degli Innocenti, Piazza SS. Annunziata 12, 50122 Florence, Italy.

International Child Development Centre Publications Catalogue. January 1993. Free.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Three Essays on the Challenge of Implementation, by James R. Himes. Innocenti Essay No. 5. 1993. US$6.

Innocenti Occasional Papers.

The Distributive Impact of Fiscal and Labour Market Policies: Chile's 1990-91 Reforms, by Mariana Schkolnik. November 1992. US$8.

Mujeres Comunicadoras de Derechos y los Derechos del Niño: El Caso Colombiano, by Carlos Castillo Cardona, Nelson Ortiz Pinilla and Alejandra Gonzalez Rossetti. March 1993. Spanish only. US$6.

Other Publications

Between the Guns: Children as a Zone of Peace, by Varindra Tarzie Vittachi, reviews the situation of children caught in war. November 1993. Published by Hodder and Stoughton, 47 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DP, UK. Fax: 44-71-631-52448. £5.99 plus postage and packing.

Women and HIV/AIDS: An international resource book, edited and written by Marge Berer with Sunanda Ray. Published in English by Pandora Press (HarperCollins UK), May 1993. Published in French and Spanish by Women and HIV/AIDS Book Project in association with AHRTAG and Reproductive Health Matters, October 1993. Price £14.99 plus postage and packing for industrialized countries. Available from Women and HIV/AIDS Book Project, 1 London Bridge St., London SE1 9SG, UK. For developing countries, copies in English, French and Spanish are available for £5.50 plus postage and packing from TALC, Box 49, St. Albans, Herts AL1 4AX, UK. 400 pages, illustrated.

Women and Human Rights. This is the seventh book in the series "Women and World Development", prepared by the UN-NGO Group on Women and Development/UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS). The books are free for developing country organizations from NGLS, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Industrialized countries should contact: Zed Books, 57 Caledonian Road, London, N1 9BU, UK for US$17.50/£10.95 per copy.

Voices from the Field in Communication for Child Survival, edited by Renata Seidal, illustrates various aspects of promoting positive health practices among communities, health care workers and policy makers. Available from Editorial Unit, HEALTHCOM Project, Academy for Educational Development, 1255 23rd St. NW, Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20037, USA. US$15 prepaid. Free for use in developing countries.

A Dream of Peace: Human Rights Drawings by Cambodian Children, published by the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), contains drawings chosen from 10,000 children's entries on "What Human Rights Mean to Me". Proceeds, through KHEMARA Trust Fund, will provide books for Cambodian children. KHEMARA, c/o UNICEF Cambodia, 11 75th St., Srachark Quartier, Phnom Penh. Fax: 855 23 26284. 50 p. US$10. T-shirt, US$7.

UNICEF Videos

Audiovisual materials are available from UNICEF offices and National Committees. (Check with your local office for catalogues.)

Children First! Looking After Their Own Environment. 12.30 minutes. Video on how children can participate in caring for their environment. French and Spanish versions will follow.

Yearning to Learn: The Ifugao Experience. 16.30 minutes. Video on mobile education programme in northern Luzon (the Philippines), where teachers conduct multi-grade classes for the Ifugao children.

Images. Video (15.48 minutes) and 29-page guide with activities for group work. Education for development pack for use with young people age 14 and up in industrialized countries.

First Call for Children

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